

COVERING THE BEST IN HORROR, SCI-FI & FANTASY ENTERTAINMENT

# SHADOWLAND MAGAZINE

WE KNOW WHO TO CALL...

## GHOSTBUSTERS

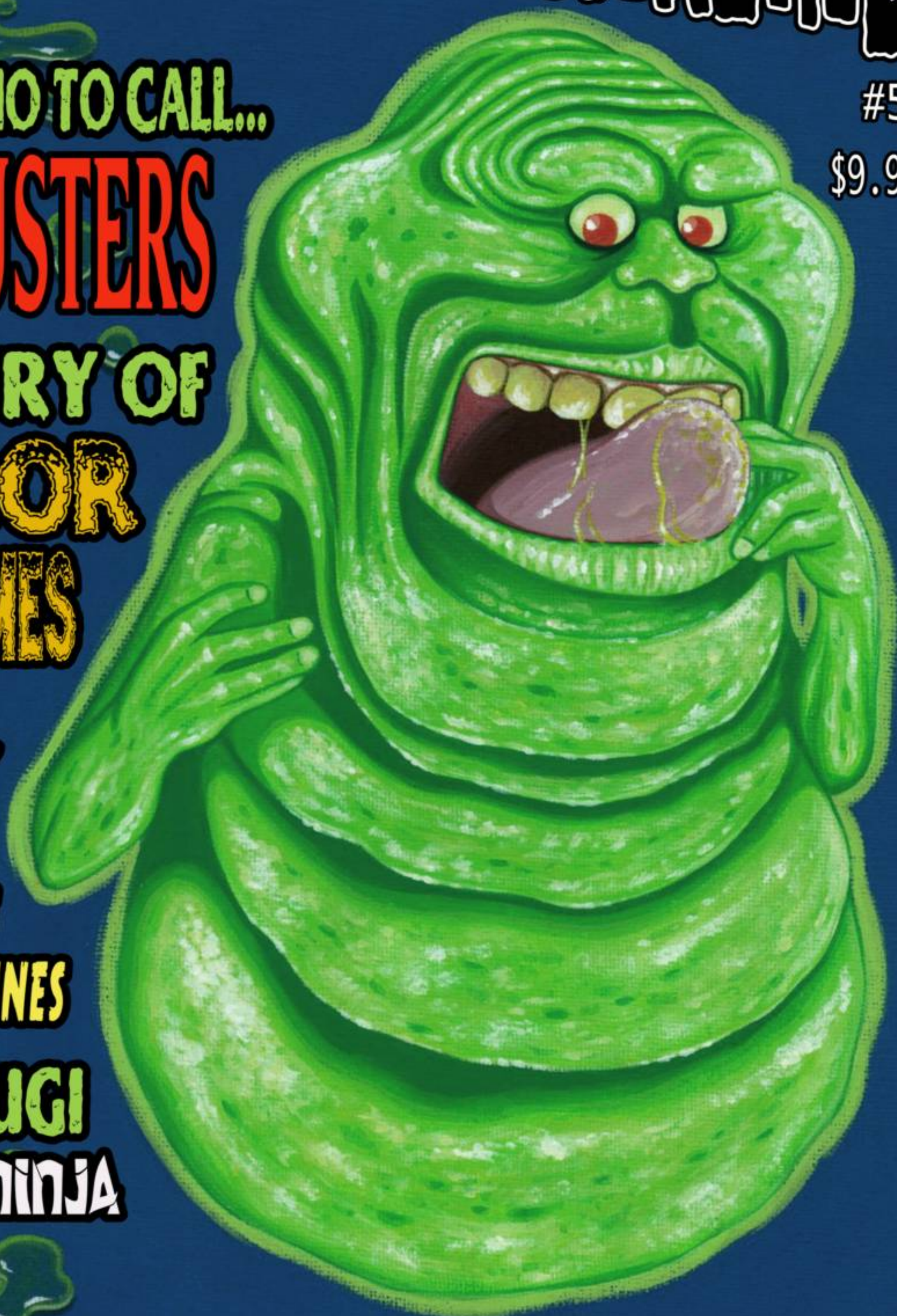
## A HISTORY OF HORROR VIDEO GAMES

THE  
LEGACY  
OF DR. MOREAU  
MAD SCIENCE  
IN THE PHILIPPINES

SHO KOSUGI  
THE LAST NINJA

#5

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**THE  
THREE  
STOOGES  
MEET**

**THE  
MUMMY**

**A UNIVERSAL COLUMBIA PICTURE  
WILL THE  
STOOGES  
FIND THEIR  
MUMMY-  
DEAREST?**



**LARRY**

**CURLY**

**MOE**

**WITH THE UNCANNY KARLOFF**



## DREADITORIAL

Welcome to our latest issue of *Shadowland Magazine*. It's a special one by any standard – but even more so because it's our one-year anniversary issue! The last year rocketed by faster than Han Solo's ol' Millennium Falcon traveling through hyperspace, though that's not saying much considering it feels like only yesterday when Sam Raimi's *Spider-Man* (2002) hit theaters – and ten years later there's already a reboot out! Nevertheless, it's been a great first year for *Shadowland* and we have some fantastic surprises in store for our second.

Now, without further delay, let's break out the cake and celebrate with the frightful fifth issue now held within your claws! To start off the festivities, you'll notice that a certain 'Class 5 full-roaming vapor' dignifies our cover. Rendered in glorious ectoplasmic detail by Dwayne Pinkney, the Ghostbusters' favorite green spud, Slimer, is all set to cause some mischief. Appropriately, in this very issue we have an article looking back at the *Ghostbusters* franchise, in particular that of the franchise's lesser-noticed aspects. We also dig into the history of horror video games, take a gander at Dan Curtis' impressive legacy, and look at the films of the indomitable Sho Kosugi. There's much more between these covers too – 100 pages worth!

Also, it was mentioned last issue that we would be featuring a piece on the Trendmasters toy line this time around. Due to space constraints we're holding that particular retrospective until the next issue, but it'll be worth the wait – and you won't find a more in-depth article on the topic anywhere else!

Unfortunately, as many have already heard, the great Ray Bradbury passed away on June 5th 2012 at age 91. Science fiction fans have lost one of the greatest writers to ever grace the illustrious genre; *Fahrenheit 451* and *The Martian Chronicles*, among his many other works, were imbued with a unique sense of creativity, imagination, and social reflection. Yet, despite his passing, Bradbury is not gone; he has achieved immortality – his stories, as relevant today as they were when first published, will live on and continue to inspire for generations to come.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

**Cover:** Ready your proton packs, get out your ghost traps and consult Tobin's Spirit Guide because Dwayne Pinkney's Slimer looks ready to haunt the Sedgewick Hotel once more! Dwayne Pinkney is available for commissions at [DPinkneyArt@hotmail.com](mailto:DPinkneyArt@hotmail.com) - more of his artwork can also be seen at [www.ShadowlandMagazine.com](http://www.ShadowlandMagazine.com).

**Inside Front Cover:** Mock-up poster for *The Three Stooges Meet The Mummy*, the greatest movie never made!

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# NEWS BITES



## FIST OF IRON

Marvel Comics' *Iron Fist* will be making the leap to the big screen. The martial arts superhero with the superhuman punch first appeared in *Marvel Premiere* #15 (May 1974). Steve Carr (*Daddy Day Care*) is set to direct with Rich Wilkes (xXx) handling screenwriting duties. The film, currently in the early development stages, has yet to be given a release date.

## SEEING IS BELIEVING

The Invisible Man won't be out of sight for long. Universal Pictures and Imagine Entertainment have hired screenwriter David S. Goyer (*The Dark Knight*, *Blade* trilogy) to pen an adaptation of the H.G. Wells novel, as well as direct. The film, taking place during World War II, will focus on the nephew of the original Invisible Man and his exploits as he aids British Intelligence against the Nazis. *The Invisible Man* will sneak into theaters in 2013.

## SCARY TALES

The director of 2009's Nazi/zombie mash-up, *Dead Snow*, is in the post-production stages of his latest film, *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters* – a new take on the popular children's fairy tale. Starring Jeremy Renner and Gemma Arterton as the grown-up title characters, the story takes place fifteen years after the gingerbread-house incident and depicts the brother-sister duo as bounty hunters tracking down witches across the globe. Paramount Pictures has announced a January 10th, 2013 release date.



Arterton (left) and Renner (right) prove that witch hunting is Grimm business.

## RETURN TO SPARTA

*300: Battle of Artemisia* is in production. Producer Mark Canton has stated that the follow-up to Zack Snyder's 2006 film will neither be a prequel or a sequel, but "another story set in the 300 universe." Noam Murro (*Smart People*) is directing. Scheduled release date is August 2nd, 2013.

## HUNGRY LIKE THE WOLF

A sequel to the 2002 horror/action film *Dog Soldiers* is underway. Kismet Entertainment has announced that they have a script for *Dog Soldiers: Fresh Meat* and a tentative release date of 2014.

## READY FOR A GHOST STORY?

William Castle's television series *Ghost Story* aka *Circle of Fear* has finally made it onto DVD. (Check out *Shadowland Magazine* #2 for an in-depth look at the series as well as detailed coverage of every episode.) Sony has released the complete series on a 6-disc box set through their manufactured-on-demand program.



## YOU WON'T LIKE HIM WHEN HE'S ANGRY

Marvel Comics' incredible green Goliath, the Hulk, will be returning to the small screen next year. A new cartoon series titled *Hulk and the Agents of S.M.A.S.H.* will air on Disney XD by early 2013.



## STRANGE HAPPENINGS ON MOCKINGBIRD LANE

Post-production for the pilot of NBC's *The Munsters* reboot, titled



*Mockingbird Lane*, is currently underway. The show is being billed as an 'edgy' one-hour drama that combines elements of *Modern Family* and *True Blood*. Jerry O'Connell (*Piranha 3D*) has been cast as Herman, Eddie Izzard (*Shadow of the Vampire*) as Grandpa, and Portia de Rossi (*Dead & Breakfast*) as Lily. NBC hopes to have the pilot movie, directed by Bryan Singer (*Superman Returns*), air sometime late 2012.

### A SHOCKING READ

Donald F. Glut's latest book, *Shock Theatre Chicago Style*, will hopefully be available in time for Halloween of this year. Chronicling the late-night exploits of WBKB-TV's horror host, Marvin, Glut takes an affectionate look back at this ghoulishly hilarious television personality who introduced Chicagoland youngsters to the delights of classic horror films between December 1957 and October 1959. Included are photos, vintage advertisements, a foreword by Marvin's son, and an afterword provided by horror host Count Gore De Vol.



### THEY DON'T COME IN PEACE

*Mars Attacks* will be invading toy stores this fall with Mezco's 6-inch Martian soldier figure, due out in November. Mezco will also be releasing an 8-inch plush doll of the brainy invaders and Gentle Giant has a *Mars Attacks* ship ornament arriving in December – perfect décor for everyone's holiday season! Looking for new *Mars Attacks* stories? Check out IDW's ongoing monthly comic series, now available!



### SCHOOL'S OUT

Troma Entertainment has sold off the rights to a number of their most popular films in a bid to get several larger studios to produce remakes, one of which is the 1986 cult classic *Class of Nuke 'Em High*. The plot of the original focused on a radioactive leak that transformed normal high school students into marauding mutants. No release date is yet known.



### CLOSER ENCOUNTERS

Oren Peli, writer, director and producer of *Paranormal Activity*, is dabbling in the 'found footage' genre again with *Area 51*. Trading in ghosts for extraterrestrials, Peli's film chronicles newly 'discovered' footage of the top secret Area 51 base in Roswell, New Mexico. *Area 51* will hit theaters in 2013.

### MOVIEGOERS MAY SOON SEE RED

Director Simon West is rumored to be taking the director's chair for the upcoming *Red Sonja* film. Originally Robert Rodriguez was set to direct with Rose McGowan in the title role. Rodriguez will now sit in as producer. Amber Heard is being eyed as McGowan's replacement. A 2013 release is possible.



### THEY'RE CREEPY, KOOKY AND... ANIMATED?

Illumination Entertainment has green-lit an animated *Addams Family* film to be made entirely via stop-motion. Christopher Meledandri (*Ice Age*, *Despicable Me*) will produce. Expect *The Addams Family* to hit theaters in 2014.



Hanna-Barbera's 1973 Addams Family cartoon.

### THERE CAN STILL BE ONLY ONE

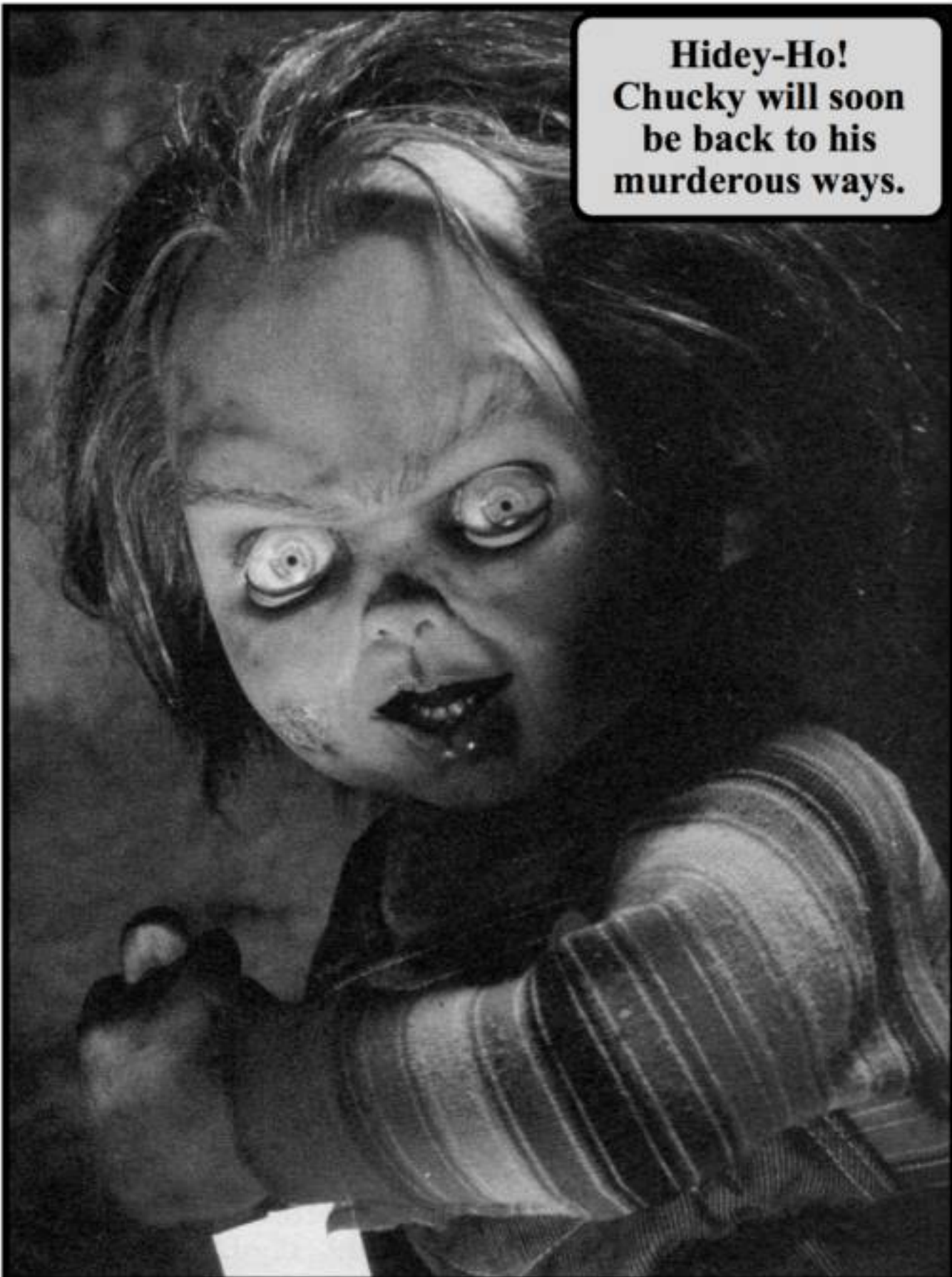
*Iron Man* scribes Art Marcum and Matt Holloway have submitted their screenplay for the *Highlander* remake. The original, released in 1986, spawned a series of sequels, a television series, and a cartoon. No cast or director has yet been confirmed for



the remake, currently slated for a 2014 release.

### MASTERS OF THE TOY UNIVERSE

Filmmakers Roger Lay Jr. and Corey Landis' feature-length documentary *Toy Masters* will be the definitive look at the *Masters of the Universe* phenomenon, exploring the controversial origins of the billion-dollar franchise. Having screened exclusive material at this year's San Diego Comic Con and securing its world premiere at the 2012 Fantasia International Film Festival in Montreal, *Toy Masters* is sure to be a hit with MOTU fans the world over. Visit [www.ToyMastersMovie.com](http://www.ToyMastersMovie.com) for all the latest information.



Hidey-Ho!  
Chucky will soon  
be back to his  
murderous ways.

### WITCH WAY TO SALEM

Modern day Salem, Massachusetts is visited by a coven of witches in Rob Zombie's latest film, *The Lords of Salem*. Currently in post-production, Zombie's horror feature is expected to be released by late 2012.

### LIVE-ACTION ASSASSIN

Ubisoft Entertainment has optioned the film rights to their hit video game franchise *Assassin's Creed*. The series of popular video games tell the story of a young man who is captured by an evil corporation and sent back in time to relive the memories of his assassin ancestors – while also finding the whereabouts of ancient relics. Michael Fassbender (*X-Men: First Class*, *Prometheus*) will star.



### CHYLDE OF THE DARK

A feature film of *Darkchylde*, based on Randy Queen's popular comic series, has been in development for years, but fans may finally see the project come to fruition in 2013. Initial test footage was released in 2010 but nothing became of it. John Carpenter is supposedly still attached to the project. *Darkchylde* tells the story of a cursed teenage girl who can become the monsters from her nightmares in order to fight the forces of evil.

### A DIFFERENT KIND OF TOY STORY

Chucky, everyone's favorite Good Guy doll, will be returning in *Curse of Chucky*, written and directed by series mainstay Don Mancini. Brad Dourif will reprise his role as the killer doll's iconic voice. The sequel will be darker than previous installments and takes place directly after *Child's Play 3*.

### MORE PIG'S BLOOD

Chloë Grace Moretz (*Let Me In*, *Dark Shadows*) will be playing Carrie White in the upcoming *Carrie* reboot, based on the 1974 Stephen King novel and 1976 Brian De Palma film. *Carrie* will be arriving in theaters on March 15th, 2013.



# "BUT THE KIDS LOVE US!" A LOOK AT THE GHOSTBUSTERS FRANCHISE



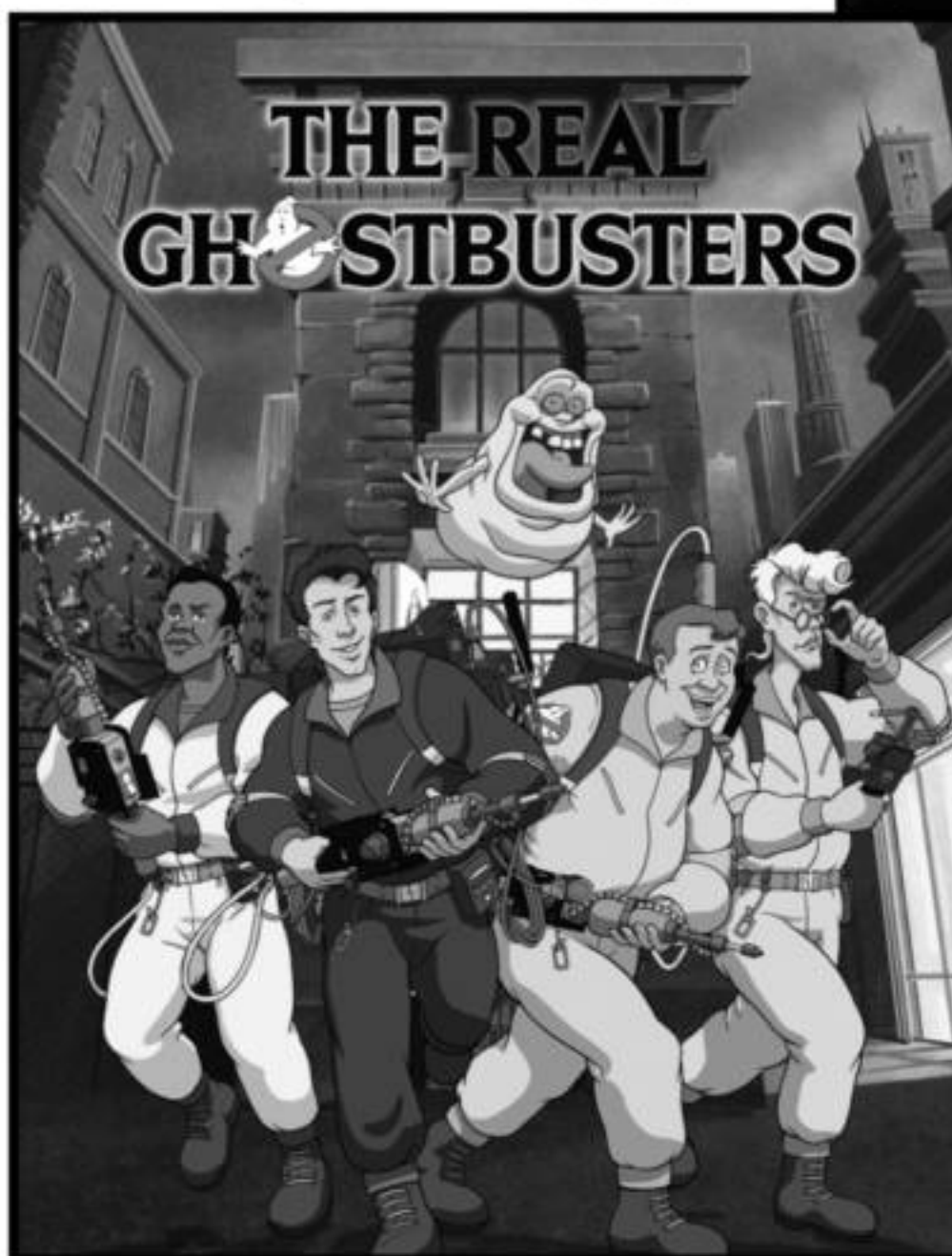
By Flynn Cook

## 1984-1988: The GB Boom

I'm sure it's a film that needs no introduction to you: the 1984 classic about three parapsychologists (and a hired hand) doing battle against spectral forces using spectacular weaponry while turning a profit from it. Probably everyone reading this has at least seen the first film (and if you haven't, stop reading this and go Netflix it!), so I'm going to be talking about the *rest* of the Ghostbusters franchise, hopefully aspects of it many of you have passed up.

The next thing to hit after the film was the 1986 television cartoon *The Real Ghostbusters*. Confused about the title? Well, it turns out that there was *another* Ghostbusters series before the movie—a live-action children's show from the 1970s by the same name. It featured wacky acting and a guy in a cheap gorilla suit! When the film came around, Columbia Pictures had to secure the right to use the title legally, which they did. This right to use the title even trickled down to television, leaving Columbia/DIC to call their show by the same name. But Filmation decided to resurrect *their* Ghostbusters as a new animated cartoon, in the wake of the '84 film's success, and desiring to clear things up for the kiddies and stick-it to Filmation in the process, the movie-based cartoon would be called "The Real Ghostbusters" emphasizing to kids that *this* was the Ghostbusters that they wanted!

*The Real Ghostbusters* (RGB) was an unusual cartoon series for a number of reasons, chief among them was its generally dark tone; uncharacteristic for an 80s cartoon. It was a period of high sanitization in



cartoons, usually resulting in formulaic stories for the Transformers, the G.I. Joes, and others. And while RGB wasn't serialized, it didn't suffer from any kind of overt sanitization (until later). The premise skirts aspects the censors would object to. It encourages teamwork; they're fighting using bizarre weapons against ghosts which leaves no violence for kids to adopt themselves.

RGB ran for six/seven seasons; a miracle in the world of cartoons. It was bolstered by a successful toyline, naturally. Running on ABC and in syndication concurrently, the show began fairly grim and witty; with much comedy to rival the film itself! By the third season, however, mandates



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They're yours if the certificate inside this package says you're a winner! Imagine the fun you and your friends could have with this great collection of toys! Each set contains one each of the five Slimed Heroes action figures and the three Gobbler Goblins, the classic Ecto-1A and the new Ecto-Bomber vehicles, the Firehouse Headquarters and two cans of Ecto-Plazm™ play gel. Also included are the new Ecto-Charger™ Pack and the rapid fire Ecto-Blaster™ action toys for more ghost hunting fun! Each grand prize winner will receive 15 exciting toys!

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came down from ABC forcing changes. Bad enough that they initially forced the villainous green hotel ghost from the movie to be the Ghostbusters' cutesy pet Slimer, but now they squeezed-out main story editor J. Michael Straczynski, and forced a more kid-friendly tone onto the series. Slimer became more prominent, voice changes were made, and elements were toned down. The show had lost its edge, and in my opinion, never got it back.

But most of you already know about *The Real Ghostbusters*. It, like the original film, is infamous. The real meat of this article is to discuss the lesser-known or lesser-noticed aspects of the franchise, and truly, that begins with the hated film sequel: *Ghostbusters II*.

### 1989-2009: Hate and Obscurity.

There was much anticipation in the summer of '89 with GB2, anticipation that evaporated for reasons unknown to me. People generally complain about Peter's relationship with Dana's infant son Oscar, or the repetition of the first film's story beats, or even that, in whatever way, it's not as funny as the first film. I've never seen anything wrong with GB2, and truthfully, I enjoy it more than the first film. Why? Well, it's because I find it places more emphasis on actual Ghostbusting; the thing I love best about the series. If it were an actual job, that would be my chosen career path.

The characters all still resonate. The set pieces are great, the comedy is all there, and the cast nails it. I can't speak for why GB2 is hated; it's just one of those

things. If GB2 is any less funny than the first, it's because perhaps the gravity of the situation takes center stage, whereas the first film was about the quirkiness of the lead characters, GB2 is all about the villain's plan and the heroes' battle. Gozer in the first film is secondary to the hijinks. GB2 is much darker.

And that's a theme that would be recurrent with all subsequent Ghostbusters material after that second film, and perhaps it's why the world seemed to fall out-of-love with the franchise's new segments; it just wasn't very funny anymore. The subtextual things in play at

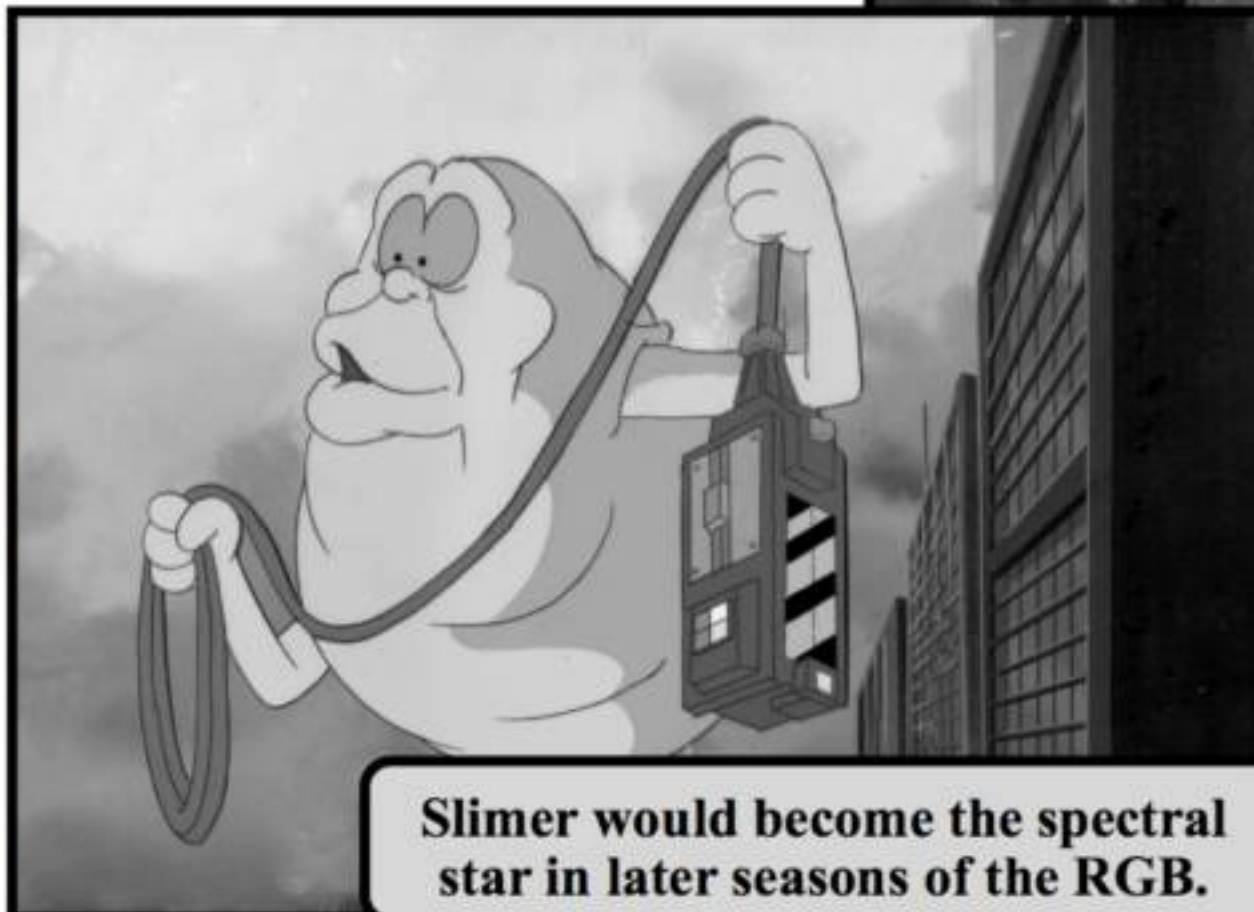
**Possessed portraits! Vigo filled in as GB2's villain.**



the heart of GB2 are frightening. Vigo, long-dead torturing warlord of the 16th century, is hoping to possess an innocent child (Dana's Oscar) to rule again. Along the way, we're reminded of his cruelty in his dialog. Gozer was a fairly mysterious and indifferent deity; it was

just going to destroy everything because, well, it was a cyclical thing. Happened a lot. Vigo? He bonded his soul to his own painting to live on

**Slimer would become the spectral star in later seasons of the RGB.**



and commit evil crimes again one day, after he was murdered by the people of his land for having been "...Vigo the Cruel, Vigo the Torturer, Vigo the Despised and Vigo the Unholy."

The scares in the first film were in service to the comedy. The scares in GB2 were in service to the story. And according to most movie-goers, this was bad, somehow. As if the concept of the series never enticed them at all, just the fact that it





was Murray, Aykroyd, Ramis and Moranis together. The film also dares to have a message, where the first film didn't. The theme of "love your fellow man, hate is tearing the world apart" didn't sit well with an audience that just wanted Bill Murray to crack wise about people without genitalia.

*The Real Ghostbusters* continued to run on a few years after GB2, until it was squashed in 1991 by the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. The franchise lay dormant for six years until a re-invention was tried in '97 with the new cartoon *Extreme Ghostbusters*.

EGB, for those who never saw it (read: most of you), was produced for first-run syndication, and myself, I was lucky to have noticed it one day in the TV listings. The series was a sequel to *The Real Ghostbusters* and



followed a new team of 'Busters under the guidance of Egon (a returning Maurice LaMarche), Janine and Slimer. The rest of the originals returned at the end of the show for a two-parter, whose voices returned from RGB. The show didn't do well in the ratings, nor in the toy aisles. Children won't want toys based on a show they never catch on TV!

Regardless, the show was something of a hidden gem, with few blemishes. The new team was a group of twenty-somethings recruited out of Egon's paranormal studies class at New York University; Roland, the African-American tech genius; Kylie, the ghost-obsessed goth girl; Eduardo, the Hispanic slacker and Garrett, the extreme sports guy who was wheelchair-bound. Garrett's disability was the worst aspect of the show. Not because I have anything against the handicapped, mind you, but because it stretched credibility, even in a show about catching ghosts. How did he not roll backwards from Proton Gun fire? Stairs? Keeping up with a chase? It was an issue that the show tried its best with, but it never worked in a logical way, with Garrett often doing ridiculous moves in his chair.

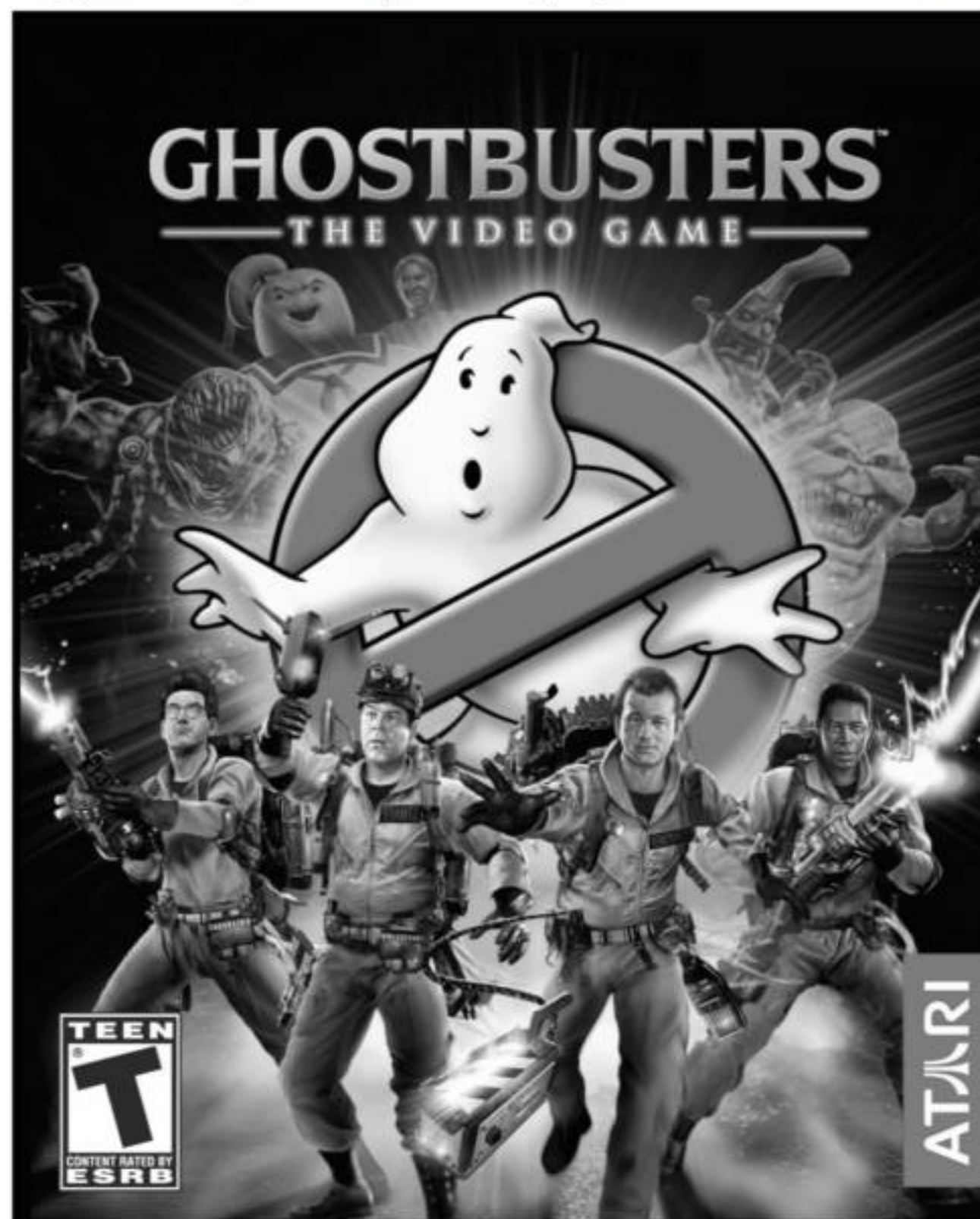
Garrett's disability otherwise, the characters were all believably characterized and the stories were

well-paced. The dialogue rang realistic and the four, along with Egon, didn't feel forced. And another thing working in the show's favor: it was unabashedly dark; whereas RGB at its darkest was merely disquieting, EGB was dark in ways that might stay with you. One episode sees the team going up against a creature that utilizes their own fears against them, of note is Eduardo's fear of death resulting in being plagued by a gruesome, undead version of himself. Another episode saw a wannabe-Stephen King at the mercy of his own horror novel creations; *Hellraiser*-style monsters with absolutely gruesome designs who capture living victims and mutilate them into one of their own. And that's just to name a few of the stories.

*Extreme Ghostbusters* met with no success, and was swiftly, sadly forgotten. The franchise at that point became a minor focal point for series-creator Dan Aykroyd for a new sequel in the same vein as EGB (with new recruits). A sequel that remains in development hell to this day. Probably better off, since "fans" of the films deplore the idea after *Ghostbusters II*. Thankfully, we did get something of a sequel in two other important entertainment fields: comic books and video games.

### 2009-Now: Subtle Revival

2009 was a watershed year for this GB fan, at least. Somehow, the stars aligned and game developer Terminal Reality was contracted by Sony (Columbia) Pictures to make a brand new, next-gen, big budget, third-person action-adventure Ghostbusters video game. Hiccapped from release when Activision dropped support for it, it was picked up by Atari for distribution





and came out a year later (it was set to debut in fall 2008, with a snappy tagline of “This fall... Who ya gonna call?”). But this wasn’t a cheap cash-in video game, oh no. This game’s script was tightened by series writers Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis, and also featured their vocal talents as Stantz and Spengler, respectively. Also returning vocally was Ernie Hudson, Annie Potts, William Atherton and, most surprisingly of all, Bill Murray – each of them reprising their film roles.

For these listed reasons alone, it should be a must-buy for anyone who calls themselves a fan. But sadly, though the game did very well and was played by many people, I can’t tell you how many people I still come across who haven’t learned of its existence, or of its quality. Movie/licensed games get a terrible rap (undeservedly in most cases, in my opinion), and *Ghostbusters: The Video Game* has been equally maligned by people who just *assume* it’s terrible because it’s licensed. I, and many others, can attest to the fact that it is one of the highest quality games manufactured! Terminal Reality nailed the gameplay experience, with Proton slinging akin to fishing. Other gameplay mechanics, with newly-created weapons for the team, also excite and are well-implemented.

Players control a nameless, silent rookie Ghostbuster who joins the team due to increased Psychokinetic levels. Venkman insists that the team not learn his name after “what happened to the last guy.” While most people may balk at this decision to control a nobody, it was the most brilliant decision; you get to feel like the team is interacting with *you*, instead of feeling like you’re playing as an existing member of the squad, making the package more immersive than you could at-first imagine. The game also boasts vocal support from Max Von Sydow (reprising his film voice as Vigo, in a clever cameo), Brian Doyle-Murray (as the mayor) and Alyssa Milano as the new love interest for Venkman.

Going back to what I mentioned earlier about the tone of the series, post first-film, the game extrapolates this to the fullest degree: the game is genuinely frightening. If you’re not feeling unnerved by your lonely exploits through haunted locations (you’re often separated from the rest of the team and must reunite), you’ll jump when the game deliberately tries to spook you. Guaranteed. Whether it’s inter-dimensional exploits, or whispering demon-slime, or vicious backstories of the ghosts you’re pursuing, this game ratchets up the creep factor. Some of your favorite entities from the films return, along with locations, but it’s far from a trip down memory lane. These call backs are expertly woven into the narrative so that you can revisit, but not rehash, some of your favorite moments from the original film, but with creepier intentions, which is utterly keeping with the conditions of the GB universe. The job would clearly be a horrific and frightening one...the films just seldom tap into that obvious fact in favor of comedy. With this interactive experience, you can crank up the scary!

But pleasing the opposite ends of the fandom, without undercutting the spooky parts of the game, there are relentless laughs to be had! The interplay between the actors, first off, is flawless and as tight as it ever was. Everyone brings their A-game, even Murray



*Ghostbusters: The Video Game* has the player revisit many familiar haunts.





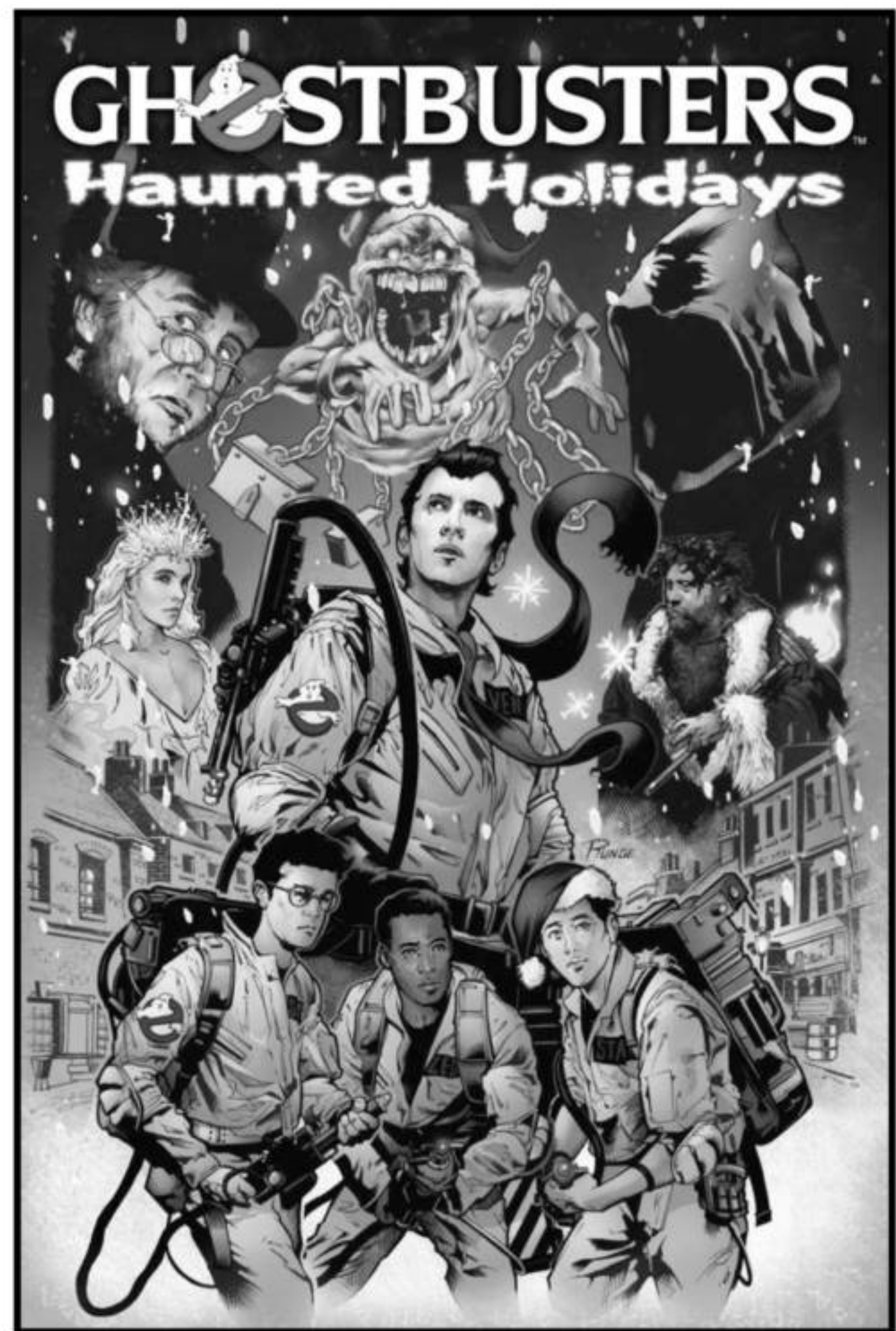
who, despite his resistance in returning to the franchise, gives his all in what may be the funniest he's been in years. Between levels in the Firehouse (which you can roam freely), you can talk to Vigo and hear hilarious (or scary) sayings as he's trapped in his painting. You can also listen to wacky answering machine messages from crazy NYC citizens. Narratively, humor happens naturally, whether it be Ray getting possessed due to his own foolish bravado, or Venkman getting slimed again in the most unexpected way.

The game has something for every GB fan. It's so good; I recommend you purchase a gaming system for it if you don't have a compatible one already! As of 2012, it's available for all current platforms.

On the comic book front, publisher IDW has been producing new GB material for many years. Prior to this, though, a studio called 88mph published a four-issue mini-series called "Legion," which was fantastic. The owner of the publisher, though, turned out to be a foolish cad, and he ran off with people's preorder money for a collected book of "Legion" and his company went under.



IDW's material, though, is superior. The material they published at first, random mini-series and one-shots, were very hit-or-miss. Mostly misses. But that has changed with their new ongoing title just called *Ghostbusters*. Scripted by the brilliant Erik Burnham and drawn by the fandom-favorite caricaturist Dan Schoening, the book has been through a few story arcs



now, and the great stories keep flying. The humor, as with the video game, is dead-on. Burnham understands what made the characters tick in the first place, and Dan's art captures the humor alone!

Stories ranging from remanifestations of Gozer to a haunted tour across America, the plotting is tight and the continuity continues on from the video game (the game took place in 1991, two years after *Ghostbusters II*). Walter Peck is the team's government liaison, and can't keep from giving the four a hard time. While the franchise may be down, it certainly isn't out, and the hit comic series keeps the torch burning! Consult with your local comic shop and pick it up!

It seems that the Ghostbusters franchise kind-of lost fans as it went. With each new element added (RGB, GB2, EGB), fans decided the series had 'jumped the shark' to some degree, and they abandoned it. Frequently, I know of people who enjoy the series who never knew of the material post-GB2, and I'm shocked. Shocked at how people who claim to be fans can be so unaware of further developments in the thing they love so dear. I hope this article has helped you learn what's out there that you may have missed!

Thanks to Ray Parker, we know who to call. But when the fearsome foursome was looking to excite their audience with new prospects, they called the fans and the fans put them on hold. They always picked up for you, isn't it time you picked up for them?



# VIRTUAL FEAR:

## A HISTORY OF HORROR VIDEO GAMES

BY FRANK WARDEN

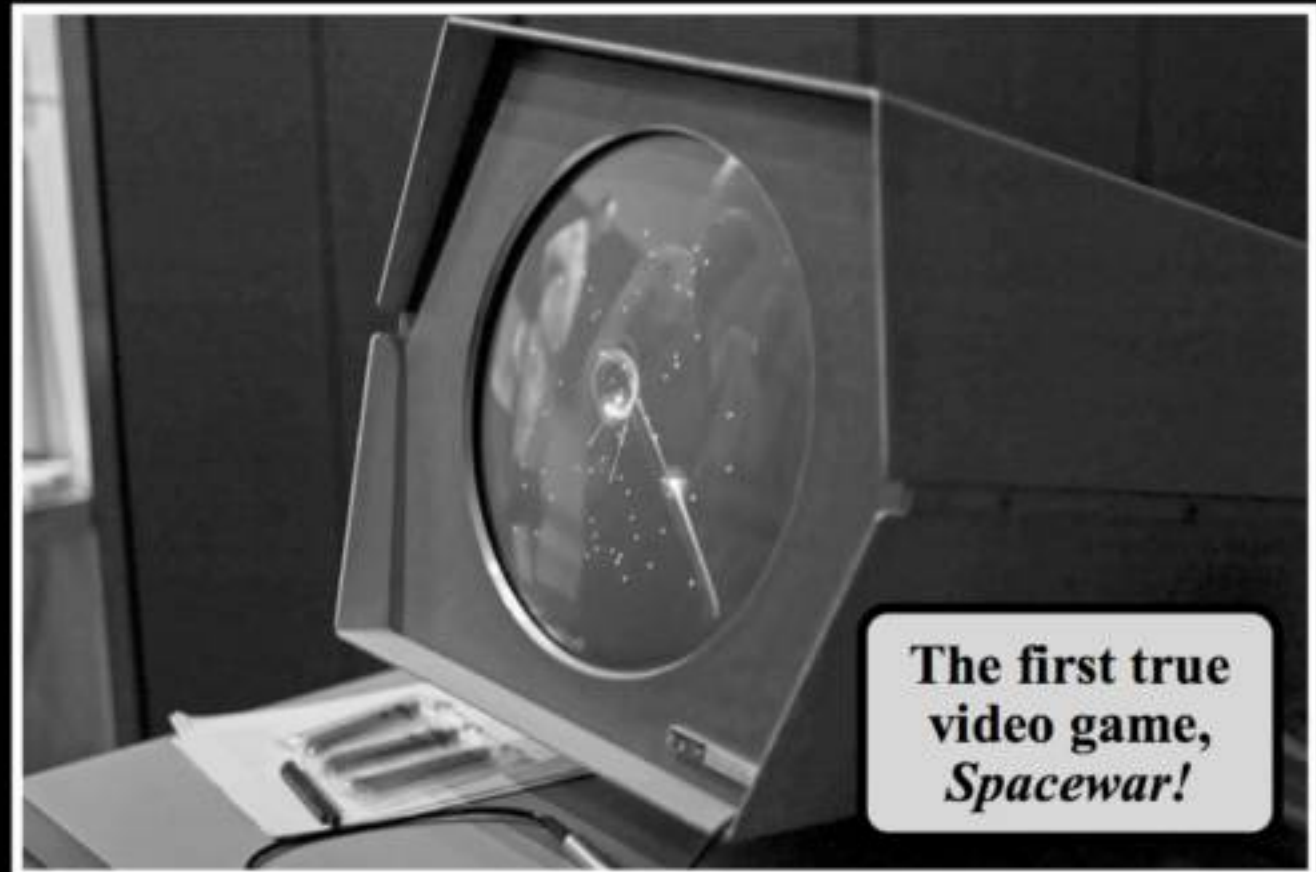
There was once a time when video games were little more than a curiosity, inaccurately viewed by many as a marginal pastime for children. It wasn't even so long ago when video game consoles *didn't* populate the majority of households, forcing eager gamers down to the local arcade, quarters in hand, to indulge in the latest release. Today such concepts seem archaic – and rightfully so; according to a study conducted by the Entertainment Software Association in 2011 the average video gamer is around 35 years old and the typical U.S. household owns at least one game console, PC or smartphone. None of this comes as a complete surprise, considering that the video game industry (since its latest boom in the early 2000s) rakes in billions of dollars each year, often earning more revenue than the music and movie industries.

One of the most popular genres in the world of video games utilizes a tactic employed by Hollywood since its earliest days: fear. The horror genre permeates every form of entertainment and its celebrated popularity – not to mention profits – is a testament to the public's desire to be entertained through fright and terror. As the early silent films invoked images of gaunt vampires, misshapen phantoms, and eerie somnambulists, the initial wave of video games relied on comparable horrors to captivate consumers.

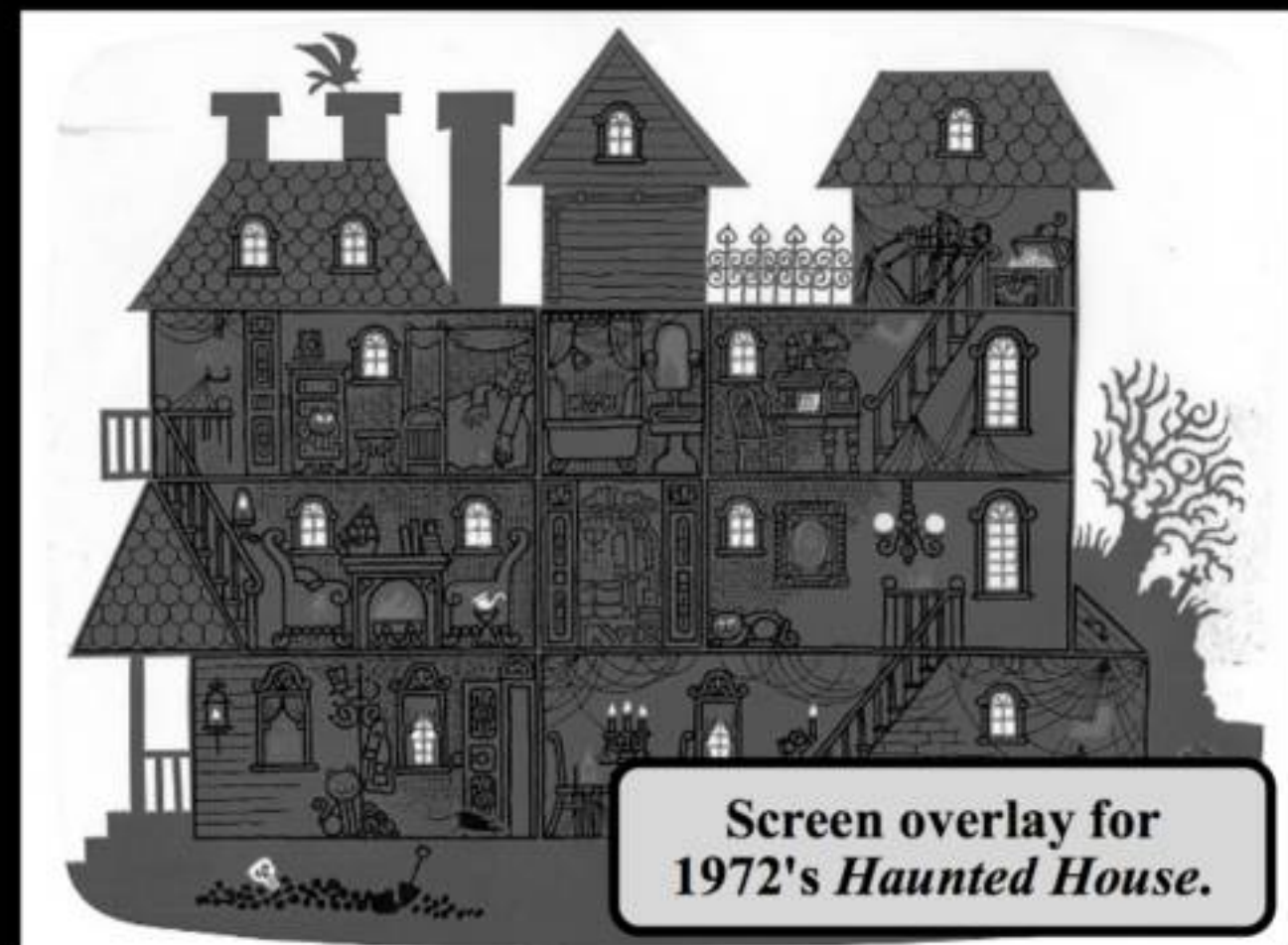
### BEFORE THE HORROR, A SPACE WAR!

The 1980s are frequently cited as the 'video game explosion' that defined the industry. What's not as widely known is that the first example of 'interactive electronic gaming' can be traced back as early as 1947, with an invention described as a "cathode ray tube amusement device." Though it was never marketed, this design would serve as the groundwork for what was to come in the following decades. The 1950s ushered in computerized versions of tic-tac-toe and tennis for high-end industrial computers while 1962 welcomed the arrival of the very first digital computer game with *Spacewar!* This sci-fi inspired game was designed for two-players, each one controlling their very own spaceship for a clash of galactic combat. *Spacewar!* came pre-loaded on the PDP-1 computer in the '60s (the PDP-1 was primarily owned by universities since each one cost a hefty \$120,000).

Video games would become more affordable and widespread in the 1970s thanks to the Magnavox Odyssey. Released in '72 the Odyssey was the first official video game console to hit the market. Bundled with the system was *Haunted House* – not only one of the initial video games to be available publicly, but the



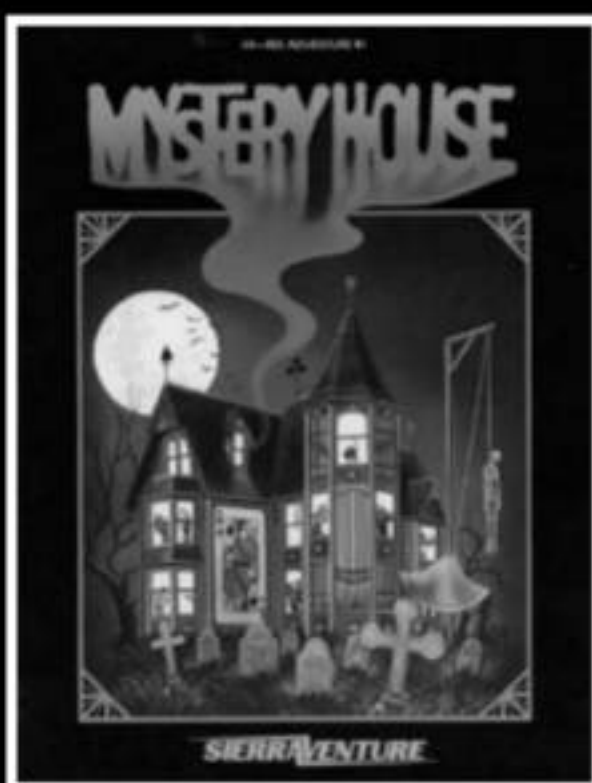
very *first* horror video game ever made. Despite these honors, *Haunted House* was a dubious title in the Odyssey's history, due in part to the game being very complicated to play, involving special 'clue' and 'message' cards, a screen overlay (with haunted house design), and requiring a minimum of two players. The general concept had one player assuming the role of a detective investigating a haunted house while the other player took on the part of a ghost. In 1975 the Magnavox Odyssey was discontinued and a new model, the Odyssey 100, hit the shelves. *Haunted House* never materialized to haunt gamers again.



### GHASTLY GAMES

In 1980 *Mystery House* was released for the Apple II 8-bit home computer. The adventure game had the player searching an old mansion for valuable jewels while the occupants are murdered. The player would then have to solve the mystery of who the killer was,





Above: Boxart for *Mystery House* and original wire-frame graphics (right).



while also escaping with the uncovered treasure. *Mystery House* was of some significance for being one of the first adventure games to utilize digital graphics.

A year later *Haunted House* (not to be confused with the 1972 Magnavox Odyssey game) came out for the Atari 2600, the leading video game console of the early-to-mid '80s. This version of *Haunted House* had the player – a pair of eyes – travel around a mansion looking for items while avoiding ghosts, bats, tarantulas, and the spirit of the mansion's deceased owner, Zachary Graves. *Haunted House* had nine different settings to increase difficulty and was an early example of a side-scrolling game with graphics and multiple levels (the house had three rooms and a basement). Regardless of the game's graphics appearing primitive by today's standards, *Haunted House* still possessed a creepy atmosphere and has been noted as a pioneer of the survival horror subgenre.



An eye for horror: despite limited graphics, 1981's *Haunted House* was the foremost horror title of its day.



An early example of a video game based on a popular horror movie was *Alien*, released in 1982. A blatant *Pac-Man* clone, the Atari game had the player avoiding a handful of aliens in a maze-like grid while using the occasional flamethrower to ward them off. *Alien* would go on to generate an onslaught of video games in the years to

## VIDEO GAME VOCABULARY

**Survival Horror:** A subgenre built around underpowered, frequently isolated characters faced with overwhelming and horrific odds. Relies on puzzle-solving and evasion tactics rather than all-out combat.

**Psychological Horror:** Can overlap with the survival horror genre, but usually delves into the less visceral elements of gore and evokes tension through emotional fear via sound effects, atmosphere, and storyline.

**First-Person Shooter:** The player experiences the action through the eyes of the character via a point-of-view camera perspective. Typically the character's hands and weapon – almost always a firearm – will be seen.

**Third-Person Shooter:** A three-dimensional game where the camera is placed either above or behind the onscreen character to give an 'over the shoulder' or 'behind the back' view.

**Text Adventure:** 'Interactive fiction' subgenre requiring only the input of text commands to progress the story.

**Point-and-Click Adventure:** Graphic-based gameplay incorporating exploration and puzzle solving; often relying on a mouse to click objects to advance.

**Platformer:** Any game, in both the 2D and 3D format, that has the character running and jumping from literal platforms, ledges, walkways, etc. *Super Mario Brothers* and *Sonic the Hedgehog* are two of the most popular mainstays in this genre.

**Shoot 'Em Up:** Gun-centric subgenre calling for the player to shoot as many onscreen enemies as possible. A popular accessory for shoot 'em ups is the light-gun, a gun-shaped control device that is aimed at a television or arcade screen, and fired, thereby registering 'shots' against onscreen enemies.

**Run and Gun:** An amalgamation of platformer and shoot 'em up games featuring heavy gunplay, strafing, and defensive barriers.

**Beat 'Em Up:** Focused on melee combat against large quantities of enemies, usually while the player walks from one level to another. Also known as brawlers.

**Hack and Slash:** Third-person titles with primary emphasis on weapon-based fighting, most often involving swords.

**FMV (Full Motion Video):** Cutscenes, either live-action or animation, within a video game.

**Motion Gaming:** Gameplay that requires motion-based controllers or sensors to control the character or object onscreen.



# DIGITAL DESIGNS

A LOOK BACK AT THE MOST FAMOUS VIDEO GAME CONSOLES THROUGHOUT THE YEARS



Magnavox Odyssey (1972)



Atari 2600 (1977)



Atari 5200 (1982)



ColecoVision (1983)



Nintendo Entertainment System (1985)



Sega Master System (1985)



TurboGrafx-16 (1987)



Sega Genesis/Mega Drive (1988)



Neo Geo (1990)



Super Nintendo (1991)



Panasonic 3DO (1993)



Atari Jaguar (1993)



Sega Saturn (1994)



PlayStation (1994)



Nintendo 64 (1996)



Sega Dreamcast (1998)



PlayStation 2 (2000)



Xbox (2001)



Nintendo GameCube (2001)



Xbox 360 (2005)



Nintendo Wii (2006)



PlayStation 3 (2006)

**Commodore 64 (1982)**  
Despite being a personal computer and not a console, the Commodore had a vast video game library and featured some of the best graphics of its day.





**NEW!**

BY EXIDY

# DEATH RACE

**FASCINATING!  
IT'S FUN CHASING!  
IT'S MONSTERS**

- o 1 OR 2 PLAYERS
- o 25 CENTS PER PLAYER
- o ADJUSTABLE  
PLAYING TIME
- o ONE YEAR WAR-  
RANTY ON LOGIC  
BOARD
- o 24 HOUR SERVICE  
GUARANTEED
- o H-64" o W-31" o D-33"

*Death Race*, released by Exidy in 1976,  
was loosely based on Roger Corman's  
1975 cult film *Death Race 2000*.

SEE YOUR  
EXIDY DISTRIBUTOR





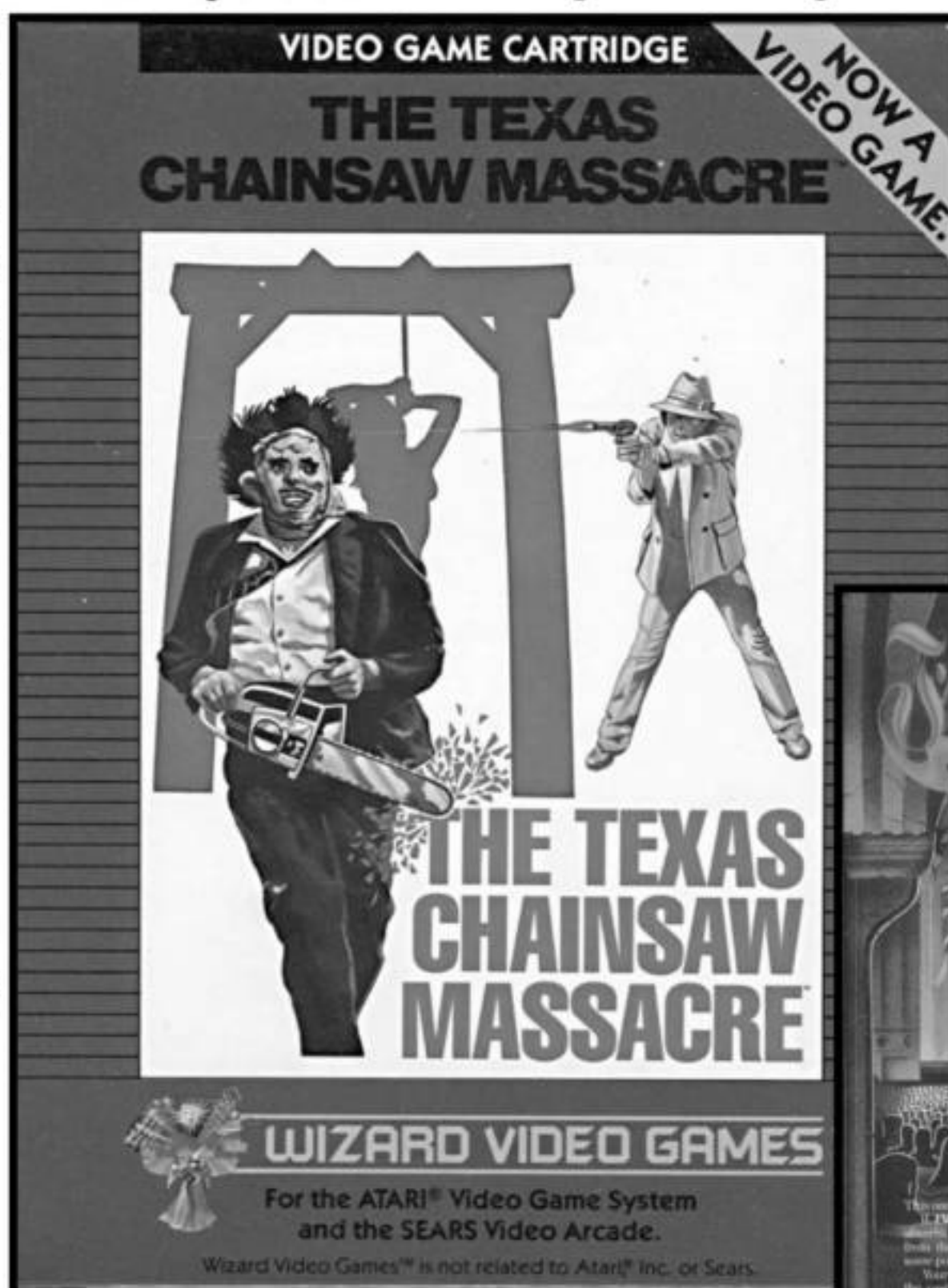
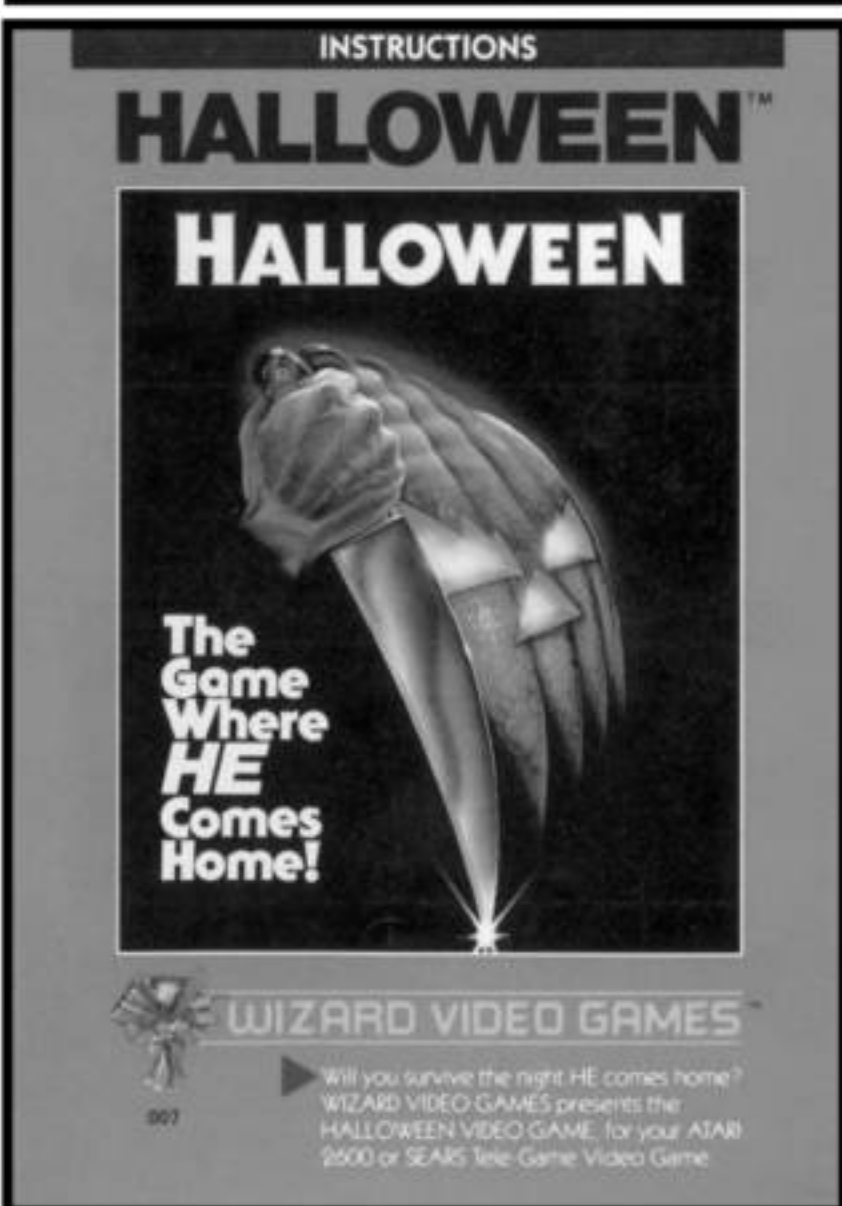
come, including two Commodore 64 titles based on James Cameron's sequel, *Aliens*, and a spin-off game for nearly every console to be made since.

The first slasher video game was *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, which landed in stores in 1983 for the Atari 2600. Because of the game's violent content many businesses refused to carry it, hurting sales and pushing the title into obscurity. Players controlled Leatherface and hunted down victims to hack up before the fuel on his signature chainsaw ran out. *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* was produced by Wizard Video, a distribution company known for releasing VHS tapes back in the '80s like *Carnival of Blood* (1970), *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978), and *Zombie 2* (1979). The company was owned by Charles Band, who

would later go on to establish *Full Moon Features*, the independent production company responsible for the *Puppet Master* and *Subspecies* franchises.

Wizard Video made a second attempt at marketing another horror movie license to gamers in 1983 with their adaptation of John Carpenter's *Halloween*. Again released for the Atari 2600, *Halloween* sold better than *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, but still failed to achieve the profits Wizard Video had been aiming for. Instead of playing the killer this time around, the players took on the role of a nameless babysitter trying to avoid an untimely death at the hands of Michael Myers.

That same year Xonox developed and published *Ghost Manor*. The Atari title gave gamers the option to choose either a playable boy or girl character and rescue their friend from the titular Ghost Manor. The enemies included ghosts, a mummy, and Dracula, all of whom the player would encounter over the course of five stages. *Ghost Manor* also made it onto the Commodore VIC-20 personal computer.

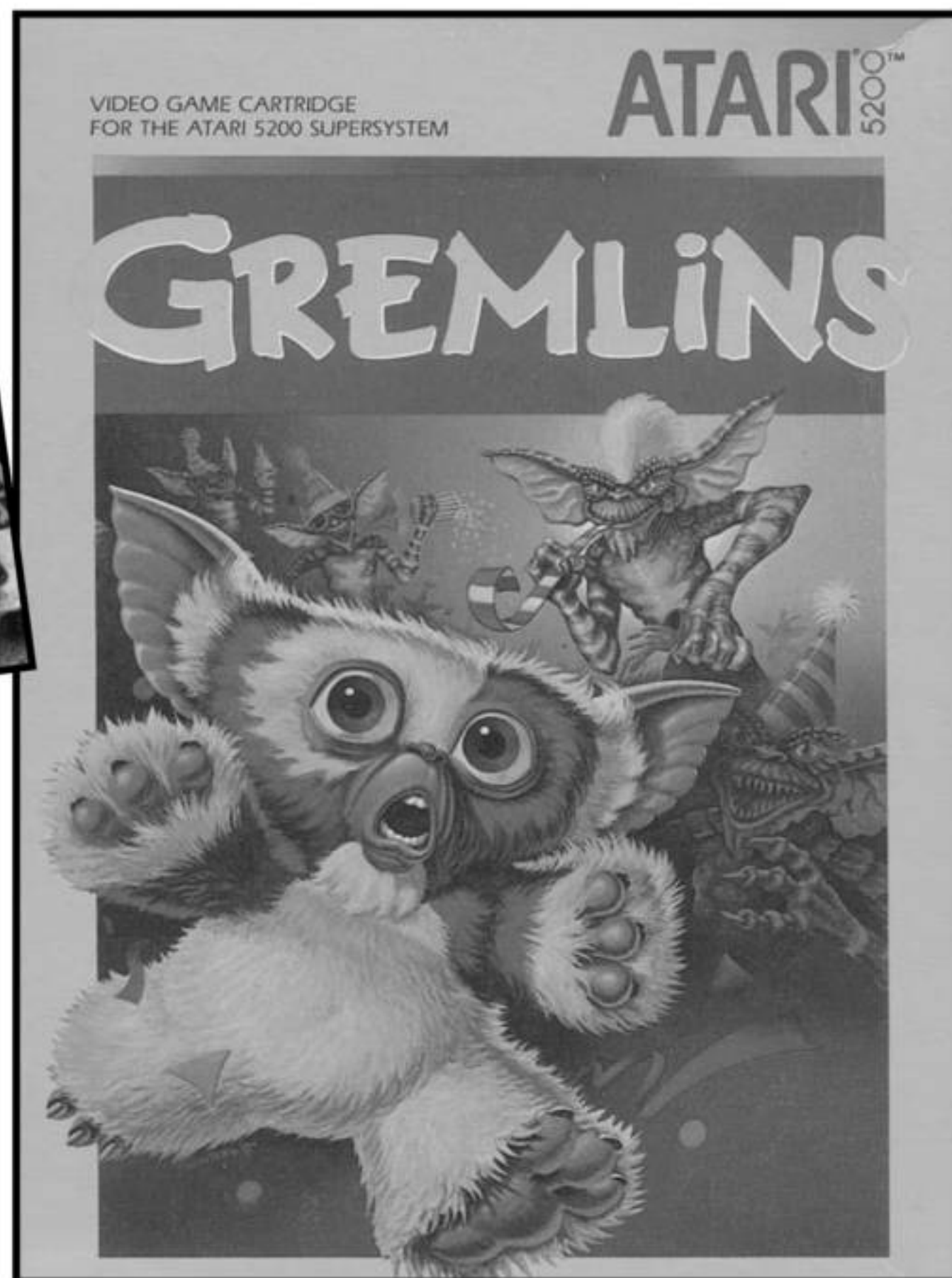


Data Age, an independent game developer and publisher, would release their best, and last, Atari game in 1983 with *Frankenstein's Monster*. The gameplay revolved around stopping the man-made monstrosity by building a wall around him before he comes to life.



*The Evil Dead* was given the video game treatment in 1984 for the Commodore 64 and ZX Spectrum computers. Featuring a top-down perspective where the player would see the action from above the characters, *The Evil Dead* adhered to Sam Raimi's 1981 film rather closely. The player runs around as Ash while



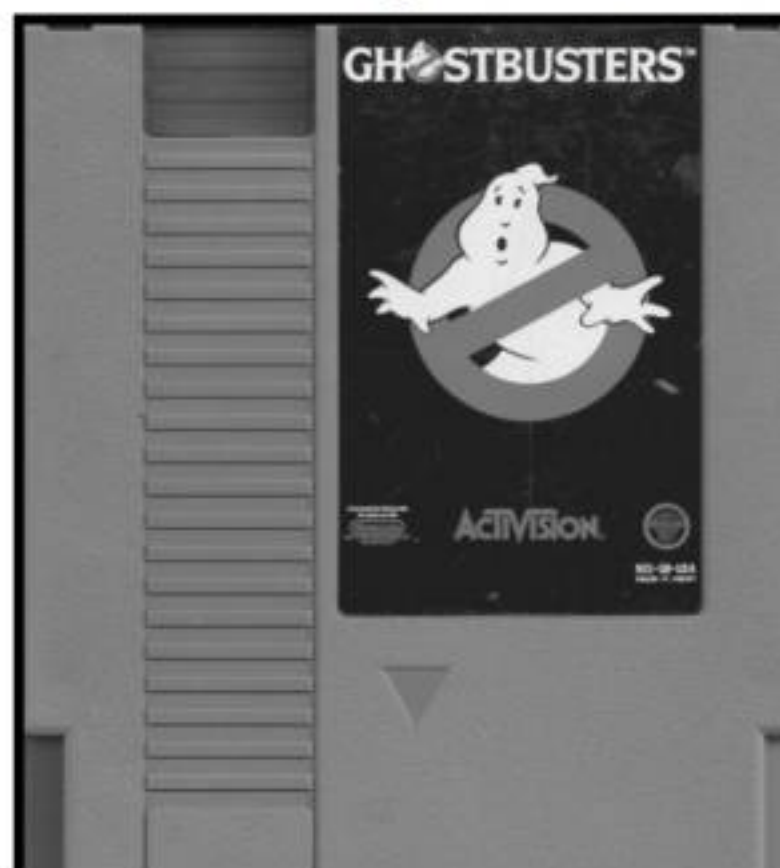
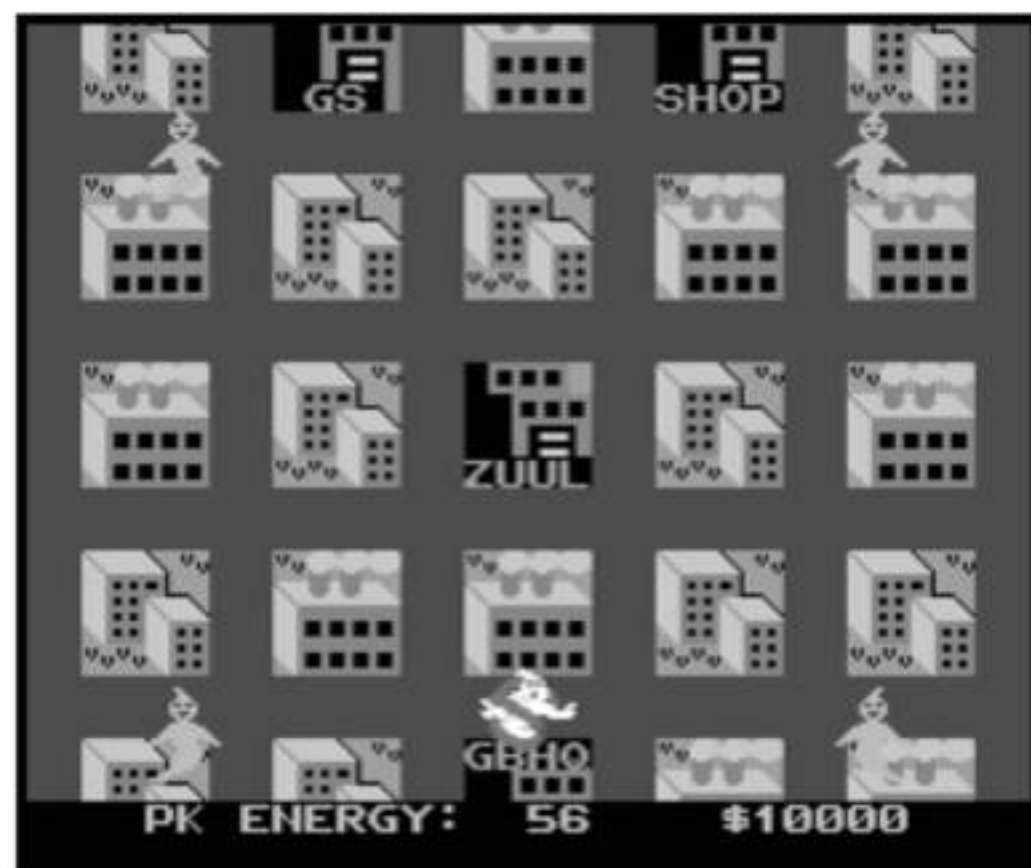


fighting Deadites within the movie's iconic cabin setting by collecting axes, shotguns, and shovels. The end of the game even had an appearance by the Necronomicon.

1984 would continue to be a strong year for Hollywood-inspired games. Activision's *Ghostbusters* arrived on the Commodore 64 and would later be ported to the Atari 800, MSX, and Sega Master System, among others. The version that went to the Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) was notorious for its altered ending and horrid spelling errors like, "Conglaturation!!! You have completed a great game. And proved the justice of our culture. Now go and rest our heroes!" Ernie Hudson, who played Winston Zeddemore in the *Ghostbusters* films, even went so far to say that his kids hated the NES version. Many *Ghostbusters* games were released since, including ones based on the sequel film and *The Real Ghostbusters/Extreme Ghostbusters* cartoons.

players to control Gizmo. The game did well enough that it was ported over to home computers.

The first incarnation of Capcom's ever-popular *Ghosts'n Goblins* swept arcades in '85.



**Left: *Ghostbusters* on the Nintendo Entertainment System. Right: Original NES cartridge.**

The Atari 2600 would also receive a *Gremlins* game before the year was out. Playing as Billy Peltzer from the original film, the objective was to catch the falling Mogwai from eating hamburgers in a game mechanic not dissimilar from *Space Invaders*. A separate, more highly-regarded version was released for the Atari 5200 in 1986. The NES and Game Boy would be infested with the multiplying little buggers in 1990 with *Gremlins 2: The New Batch*, this time allowing



***Gremlins* on the Atari 2600.**

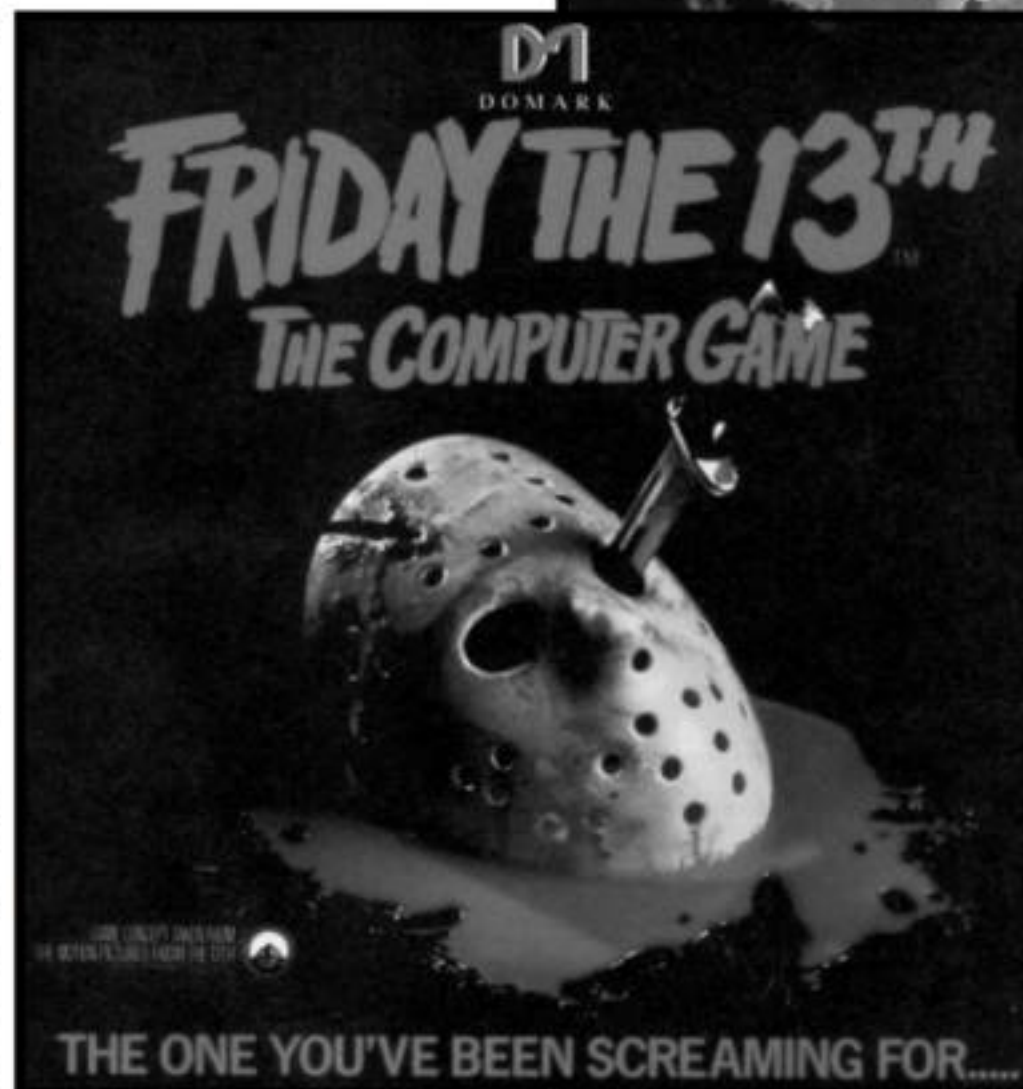


Countless coins were spent trying to navigate Sir Arthur, a brave knight, against the likes of monsters, demons, zombies and ogres to save a princess in this side-scrolling platformer. While criticized for being one of the most difficult arcade games ever released, *Ghosts'n Goblins* was a hit and a series of sequels and spin-offs have continued to this day.

"Don't dream it, play it," was the tagline for *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* computer game, released in 1985. Players had their choice of controlling either Brad or Janet as they navigated around Dr. Frank-N-Furter's castle, gathering pieces of the Medusa machine while avoiding Riff-Raff with his laser gun and Eddie on his motorcycle (a freezer temperature gauge was located on the right side of the screen, indicating his eventual appearance). Enemies could also steal the player's clothes upon being touched. The game was exclusive to home computers with the Commodore 64 version widely considered to be the best of the bunch (in 1999, a spiritual successor, *The Rocky Interactive Horror Show Game*, a puzzle-centric title, made it to the PC).

*Friday the 13th* fans with a home computer had a chance to fend off Jason Voorhees in Domark's 1986 game inspired by the infamous horror franchise. Players could choose one of five characters in an effort to find Jason before he finds you. Up to ten weapons were available to fight the hockey-masked maniac. The game had two interesting quirks, the first being that it utilized a 'panic meter' that coincided with the events of the game – a character's panic meter may rise, serving to bring Jason out of hiding to move in for the kill. The second trait was the eclectic musical score found on the Commodore 64 version, ranging from Bach's Toccata and Fugue in D Minor to Old McDonalds Farm.

Gamers on the prowl for a haunted house adventure in 1986 didn't have to look any further than *Uninvited*. Published by Mindscape, *Uninvited* was a point-and-click horror game about a creepy house crammed with supernatural obstacles and a missing sibling. *Uninvited* made the rounds on home computers but



found the most fame on its NES port, produced by Kemco, which is still commonly regarded as the best NES horror game.

The Sega Master System console made its North American debut in 1986, the same year *Ghost House* was released. One of the first games available on the console, this 2D action platformer had a misleading title since the player was hunting down vampires, not ghosts.

*Ghost House* failed to give the nocturnal blood-drinkers their due in the way that *Castlevania* did, also released in 1986. *Castlevania* was a literal game-changer and one of the industry's longest lasting franchises. Developed by Konami, the original *Castlevania* followed Simon Belmont, a descendant from a long line of vampire hunters, as he tracks down the most feared monster of them all – Dracula! Arriving on the NES, Konami's horror game was an instant success, fueling the fire for a myriad number of sequels and prequels, spanning nearly every game console and home computer ever made. Today, *Castlevania* holds seven world records in the *Guinness World Records: Gamer's Edition*, including "Most Games in an Action Adventure Series" and "Largest Number of Platforms for One Series". As of this writing, 34 *Castlevania* games have been released with three currently in development.



Above: *Castlevania* promotional art. Below: Gameplay on the NES.





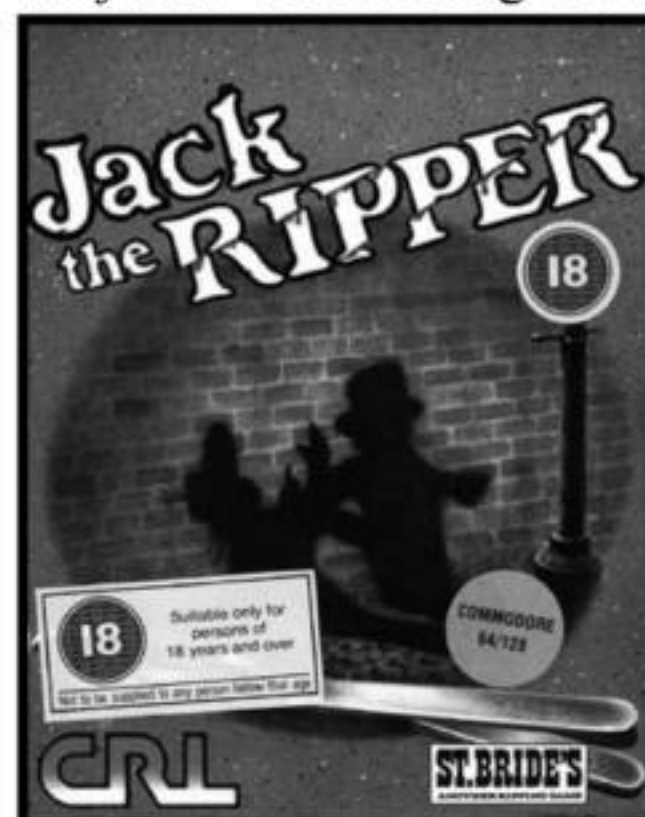
Video games weren't immune to their own share of controversy in the 1980s and few felt the backlash more so than 1986's *Chiller*, a light-gun arcade game that had players torturing seemingly innocent victims. Many arcades refused to carry the game and, as a result, it sold poorly in North America while the UK banned it outright. Exidy, the company that developed *Chiller* still made a decent profit by selling the arcade game to third world countries. In 1990 an altered version of *Chiller*, with toned-down violence and softened torture themes, was ported over to the NES. This was one of the few games that used the NES zapper gun, most known for its application with *Duck Hunt*.



H . P .  
Lovecraft would get his chance in the video game world by way of Infocom's *The Lurking Horror* (1987). The comput-

er game told the story of a student studying at a top-tier university, who braves a snowstorm to finish his term paper in the school's computer lab. When the paper vanishes on the network he tries to uncover the lost file, leading him to the horrible evil that dwells in the school, notwithstanding zombies, demonic entities, and monstrous insects. Physical bonus content was included with the game like a student identification card, campus maps, and a rubber bug.

Between 1986 and 1988 the CRL Group released a series of horror-themed text adventures for home computers. These games would have the player advance through the story by entering written commands while graphics would pop up at times. *Dracula*, *Frankenstein*, *Jack the Ripper*, and the *Wolfman* were among their most notable releases, with

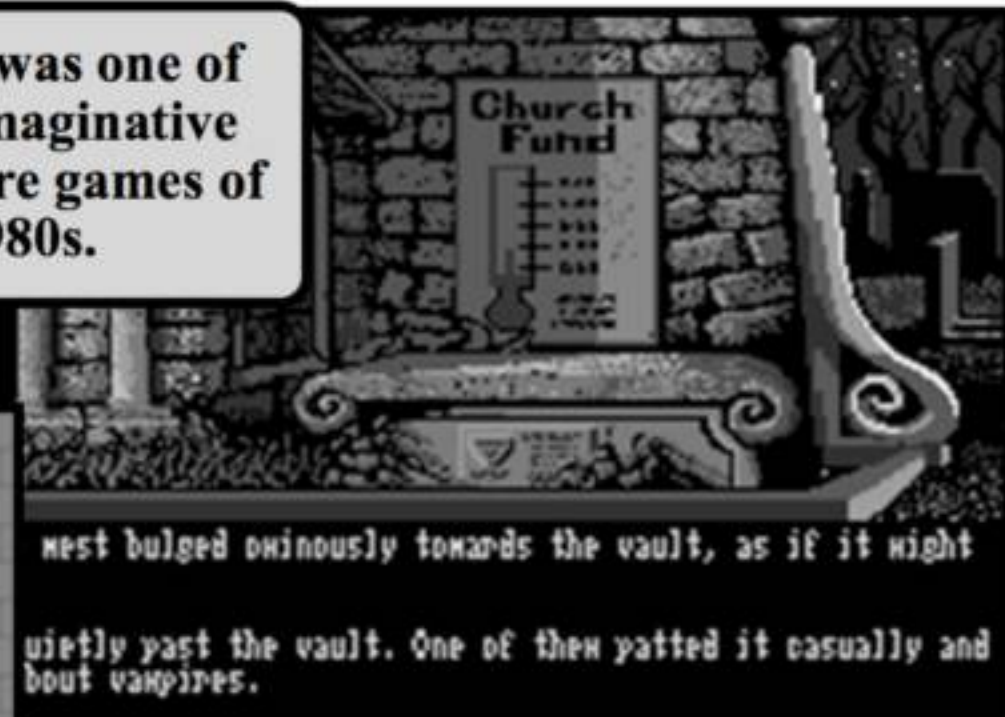


*Jack the Ripper* being the first game in history to receive an "18" certificate by the British Board of Film Censors for its gory graphics. Another text adventure game published



around the same time was *Scapeghost* (1989), about a police officer who is killed and becomes a ghost. Text adventure games had an undeniable popularity, but they never received the same acclaim or regard of titles that were endowed with a quicker pace and showcased full-motion graphics.

*Scapeghost* was one of the many imaginative text adventure games of the 1980s.



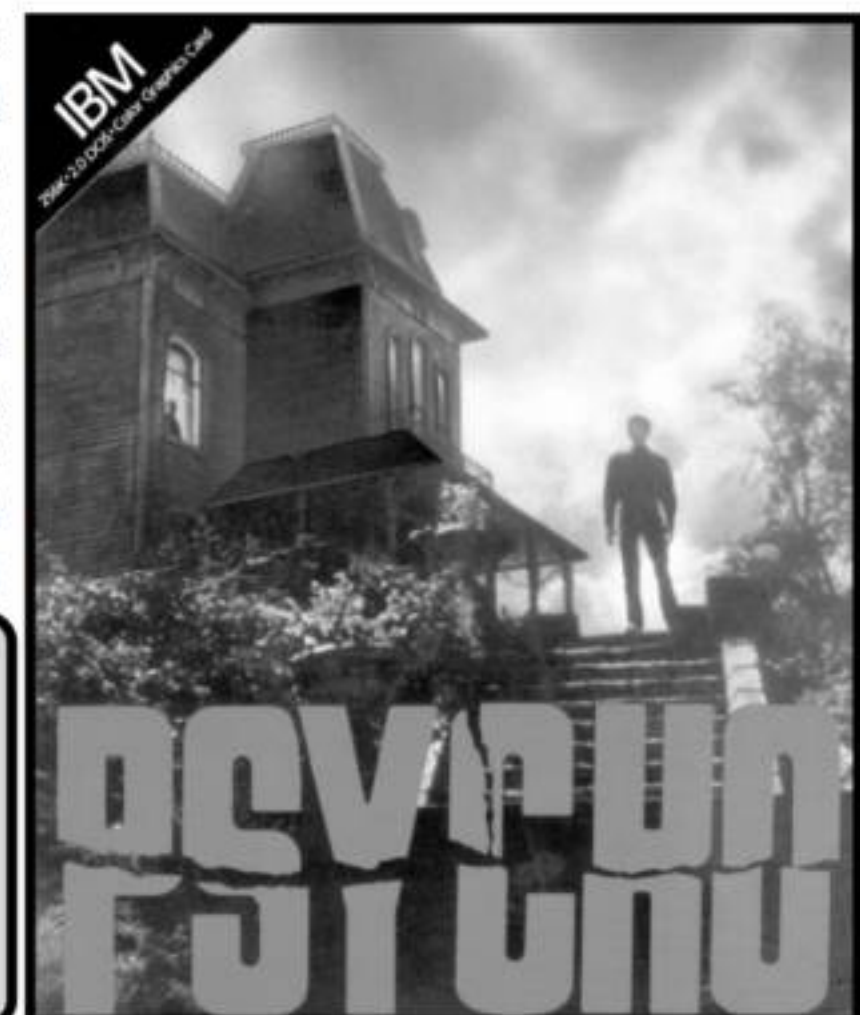
By the late 1980s the Amiga personal computer was pushing the boundaries of gameplay and visual graphics to new heights. *Fright Night* (1988), seen gamers playing as vampire Jerry Dandrige (from the film), searching his mansion for human victims. *Psycho* (1989) served as a



sequel to the original film in which a detective prowls around the old Bates Motel for clues concerning the murders. *Psycho*

was designed as an exploration game and took a few creative liberties, adding a séance room with pentagrams on the floor and a table complete with crystal ball; not to

Left: Box art for the Commodore 64 version of *Jack the Ripper* and the game cassette.

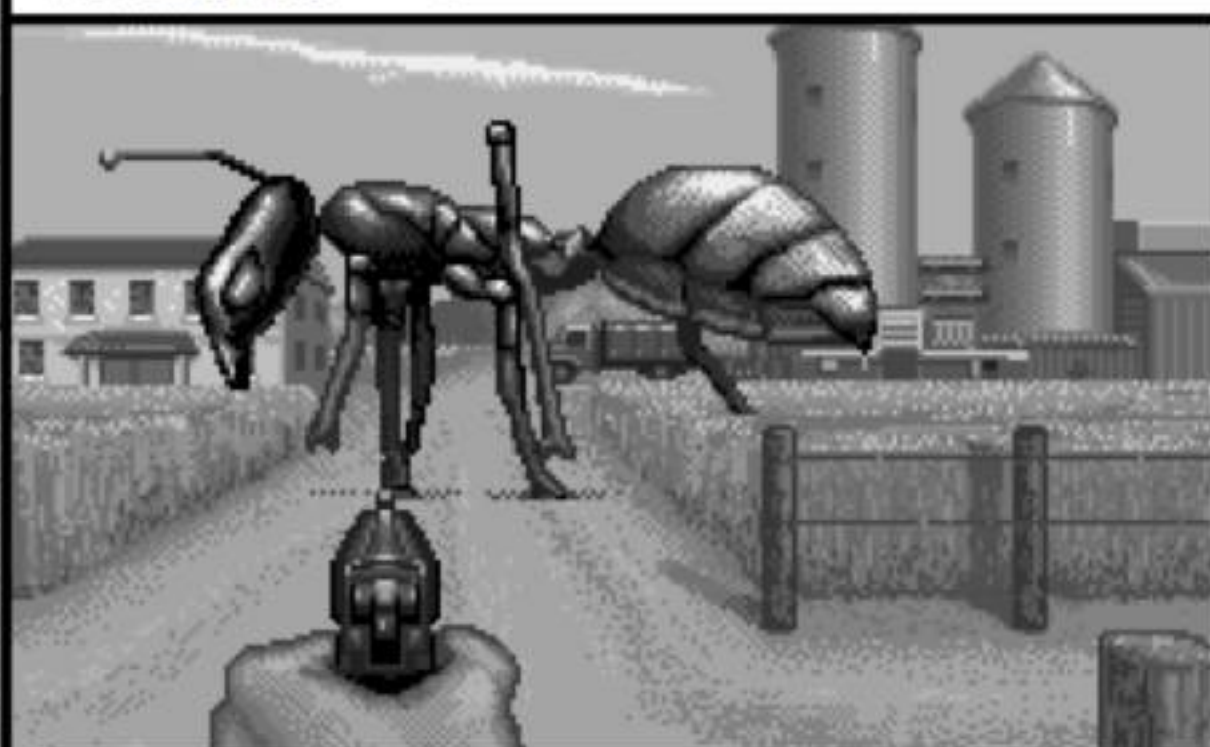
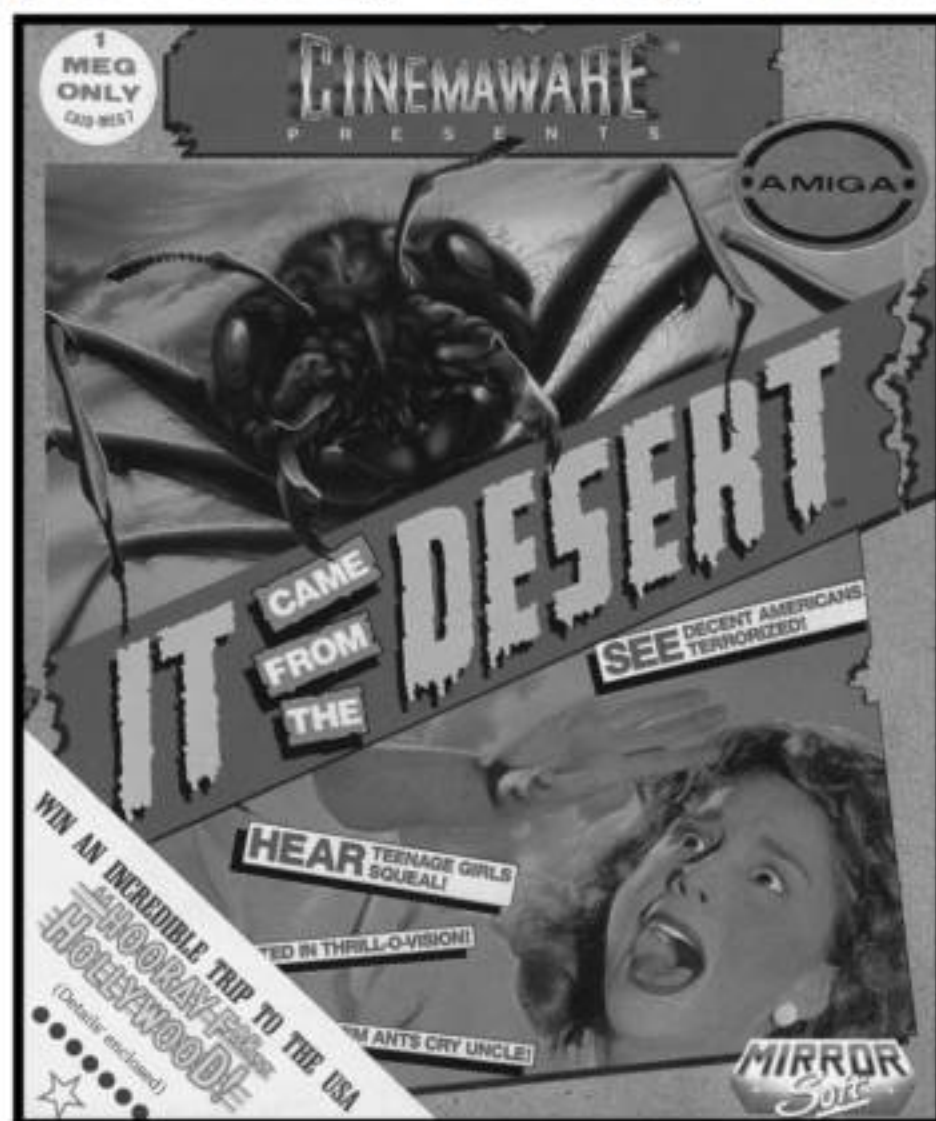




mention that there were a hodgepodge of ghosts (both human and animal) stalking the castle – with an occasional oversized giant insect thrown in for good measure. Fortunately, as the detective, your trusty gun is more than capable of eradicating most of the threats – even the ghosts.

*It Came from the Desert* (1989), Cinemaware's loving homage to 1950's sci-fi movies stands as an underrated title effectively combining puzzle solving, driving, flying, strategy, and early elements of first-person shooting. The string of movie-based Amiga

games continued well into the



*It Came from the Desert* was innovative in its use of multiple gameplay elements.

## MISSING IN ACTION

In 1983 20th Century Fox had planned to release a *Planet of the Apes* video game along with one based on the 1959 sci-fi movie, *The Alligator People*. Both were intended for the Atari 2600 and were well into development before being scrapped. Perhaps 20th Century Fox's most peculiar unreleased game was *The Entity*, based on the 1981 horror film where a woman is repeatedly raped by a ghost. Even though the game never seen the light of day in retail outlets, it was completed.

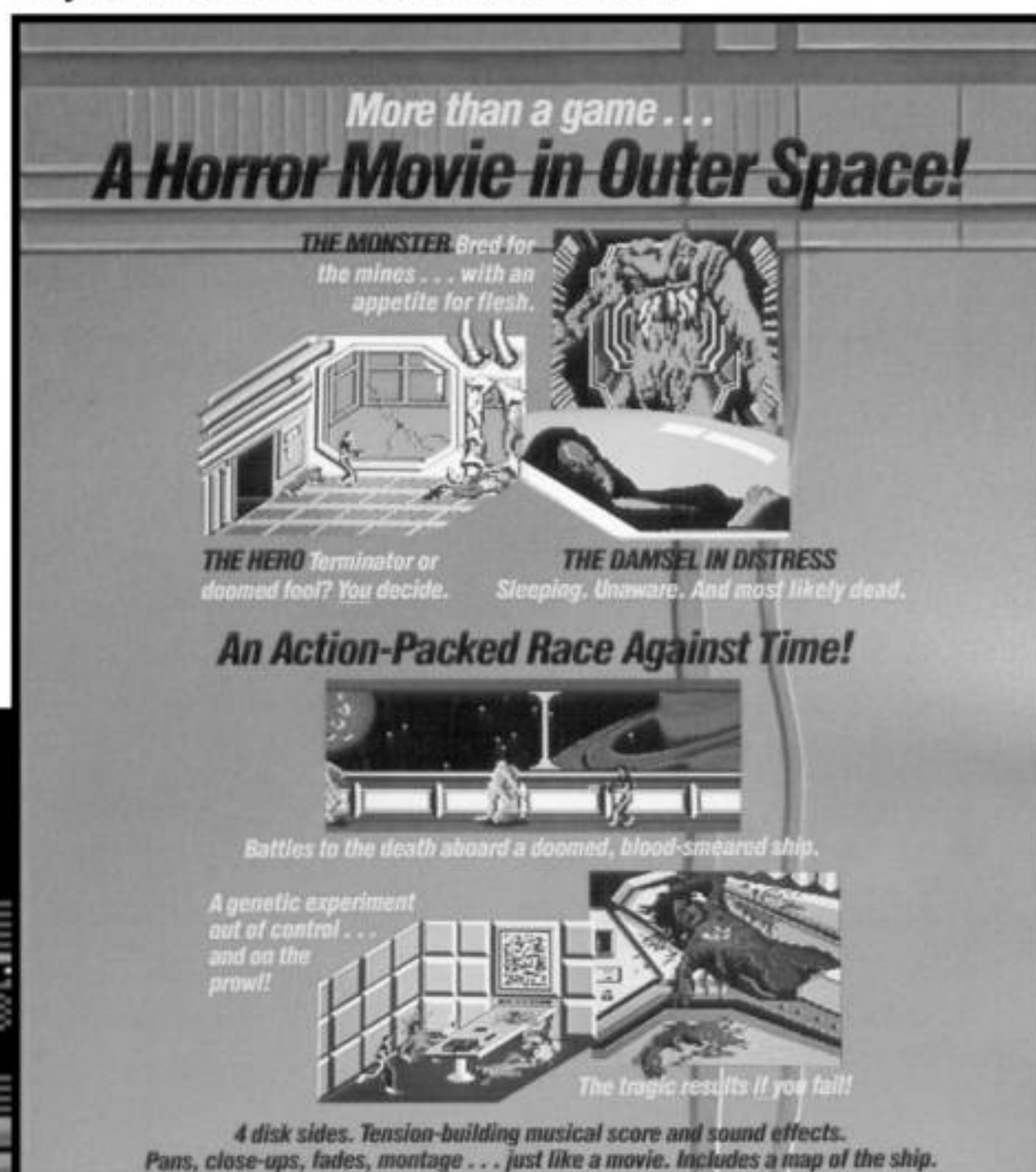
By the end of the 1980s the arcades were still making good business, indicated by *Splatterhouse* (1988), a side-scrolling beat 'em up that had the main character resembling a muscle-bound Jason from the *Friday the 13th* films, complete with hockey mask.

the '90s with *Arachnophobia*, giving fans the chance to step into John Goodman's exterminator boots from the 1991 film and eliminate deadly spiders from households.

One of the most influential computer games of the 1980s was *Project Firestart* for the Commodore 64. A space adventure that has the player finding out why communication with the space station Prometheus was lost. *Project Firestart* exhibits all of the elements that would later become standard in the survival horror genre: there are graphically violent cut-scenes, open exploration, multiple endings, journals can be found revealing the game's backstory, the player is provided with sparse weaponry and meager ammunition, mysterious creatures run rampant in the station – all raising the foreboding sense of danger and isolation. Few games were more gripping or terrifying in the '80s than *Project Firestart*.



*Splatterhouse* left a lasting impression on arcade-goers resulting in a couple of sequels and a remake for the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 in 2010.



*Project Firestart* was advertised as "More Than A Game...A Horror Movie in Outer Space!" due to its cinematic qualities.



The NES hit its stride in the late '80s and a wave of horror games came pouring into the arms of willing consumers. Nintendo was known for making sure all games passed their official seal of approval and, because of this, many titles were never as dark or graphic as they were originally intended. Bandai's *Monster Party* suffered from its original melancholic vision being diluted to a more light-hearted end product.

Bandai was also responsible for the notorious *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1988) game. This 2D side-scrolling adventure gave players the opportunity to alternate between the good doctor and villainous criminal based on an anger meter.

It was between 1987 and 1989 that the NES had its largest library of horror titles. Uncle Fester of the Addams Family fame saves the town from an alien invasion in *Fester's Quest* (1989), and more Addams Family games arrived in

**Monster Party was heavily sanitized by Nintendo.**



1989 was a big year for *A Nightmare on Elm Street* as Freddy Krueger received not one, but *two* games. The NES version required the player to collect Freddy's bone and toss them into a furnace. Not an easy task when bats, snakes, ghosts and skeletons get in your way. There's even a sleep meter that, once depleted, raises the game's difficulty. The second *Nightmare* title was exclusive to the home computer and an all-around better effort. A role-playing game with elements borrowed from *A Nightmare on Elm Street 3: The Dream Warriors*, players squared off

against Freddy – who would “cheat” (it was even advertised on the back of the box) by switching the player's items, turning the lights off on certain levels, and teleporting to and fro.

**GET THE TITLE THAT JUST MIGHT DRIVE YOU CRAZY!**

You rang.

**Fester's Quest** takes the skeletons out of the closet for a trip to outer space.

If "space games" are your thing, there's a real success one yet! With Lurch, Pugsley, Thing, and the rest of the Addams crew at his side, Uncle Fester leads the way to the wildest, most outlandish space "meat-eater!" The action is great, the graphics explosive, and the story is fun and weird to leave you howling. So hold out for yourself how much fun being crazy can be. Get "Fester's Quest." At your favorite dealer now!

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the years that followed. *Jaws* (1987) had players avoiding undersea hazards like jellyfish, stingrays, and great white sharks (a different

home computer port of *Jaws* came out in '89). *Friday the 13th* would get a video game adaptation once again, this time gamers would not only have to contend with Jason, but with zombies, wolves, crows, and Jason's mother (or rather, her disembodied head).



**Above: Freddy Krueger in the Commodore 64 *Nightmare* game. Right: The NES version.**



**YOU HAVE FINALLY MANAGED TO DEFEAT JASON ... BUT IS HE REALLY DEAD ? WE'RE NOT TELLING !! END..**

Perhaps the biggest disappointment for horror gamers of the '80s was that *Sweet Home* (1989) never received a proper release outside of its native Japan. Based on the Japanese horror film of the same name, *Sweet Home* took place in the already overused haunted mansion locale, but delved into the psychological horror aspects like no game before it and, years later, would serve as the inspiration for *Resident Evil*.

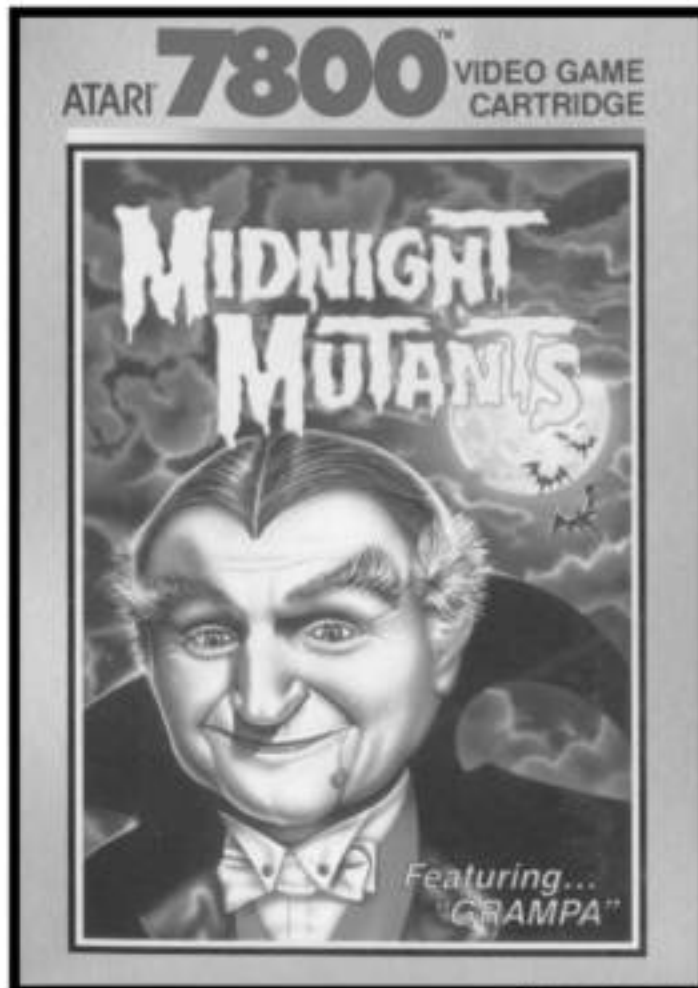


## BEYOND 16-BIT TERROR

The Amiga and Commodore 64 each hobbled on their last leg by the early 1990s with less and less games being released. Among these stragglers was *Space Gun*, a first-person alien shoot 'em up. *Elvira: Mistress of the Dark*, a point-and-click role-playing game that takes place after the 1988 film, and a couple Elvira sequel games would be published as well. *Horror Zombies from the Crypt*, a tribute to '50s horror films, made it to the Amiga and the dying Atari ST personal computer.



*Midnight Mutants* (1990) was the last game to be released to the Atari 7800 and, because of it, received limited distribution. *Midnight Mutants* takes place on Halloween, when a warlock rises from the grave to terrorize young Jimmy and his Grandpa – who just happens to resemble Al Lewis' Grandpa from *The Munsters* television show!

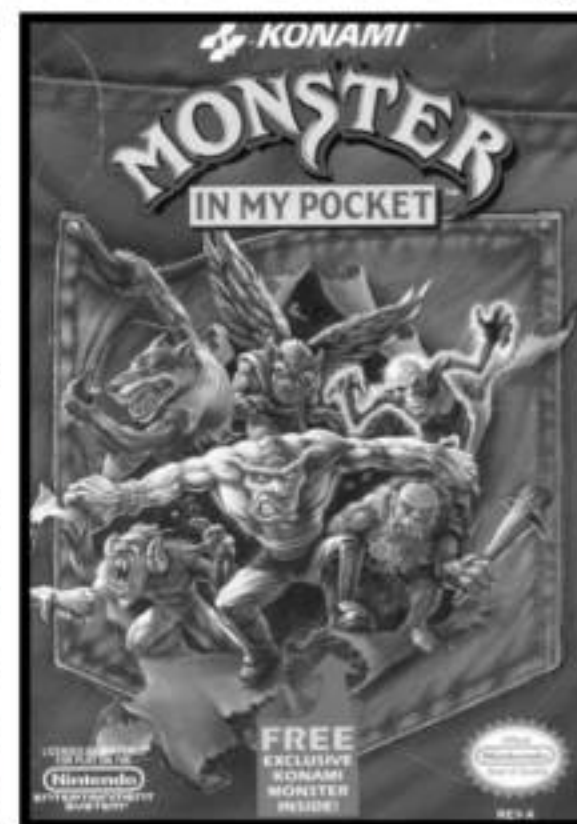


In '91 *Dracula the Undead* landed on the Atari's handheld game system, the Atari Lynx. The player took on the role of Jonathan Harker as he tries to escape Dracula's castle.

The 1990s marked what has come to be known in



gaming circles as “the system wars” when companies were competing against each other to release the hottest, most profitable video game console. The decade started off with the NES in the lead. *Monster In My Pocket* (1991), based on the popular Matchbox toy line, was published by Konami for the console and Bandai gave players the chance to hunt down Mary Shelley's iconic creation in *Frankenstein: The Monster Returns* (1991). Imagineering offered their contribution to the survival horror genre with 1992's *Ghoul School*, taking place in a high school infested with ghosts, ghouls, and demons.



With the ‘system war’ still heating up, successful games were being ported over to other systems like never before. The 1990 *Beetlejuice* game went to NES, Game Boy and the PC. With the rise of handheld gaming, few portable systems were treated to many horror related titles at the onset. One of the few exceptions was the goofy *Dr. Franken*

(1992) for the Game Boy, a mildly fun, but forgettable entry in the system's history.

The Super Nintendo (Super NES) would succeed the NES and competing for sales was a succession of consoles like the Panasonic 3DO, the Sega Mega-CD, and the Sega Genesis (known as the Mega Drive outside North America). The home computer was still very much in the running too, with its own share of outstanding titles being released like the franchise-spawning survival horror entry, *Alone in the Dark* (1992), the first-person zombie shooter, *Isle of the Dead* (1993), and *The U-*



*ltimate Haunted House* (1993), a kid-oriented adventure. Many of the PC games of the era earned a great deal of





critical acclaim like *7th Guest* (1993), openly praised by Bill Gates and one of the first games to include pre-rendered 3D graphics. And few can forget the monumental profits that *Doom* (1993) brought in – for years afterward, every game that resembled even a remote aspect of *Doom* was considered a mere ‘Doom-clone’ by rabid fans.



*7th Guest* (left) and *Doom* (right) were two early examples of pre-rendered 3D graphics.

PC games were some of the first to give the gaming medium a bona fide ‘cinematic’ feel. 1995’s *Phantasmagoria*, an interactive point-and-click adventure, was more akin to a Hollywood horror movie than a typical game. With a 550 page script, four months of filming, and over 200 people involved, the game was a massive undertaking to develop and took a whopping seven CD-ROMs to fit all of its content. The story revolved around an author who inadvertently unleashes a demonic force in the remote mansion she just bought. The mature content of the game sparked controversy, but that didn’t stop *Phantasmagoria* from becoming one of the best-



Live-action footage was used to give *Phantasmagoria* a ‘movie-like’ feel.



selling PC games of 1995. Not all computer games earned universal approval or sales; *Harvester* (1996), an open-world point-and-click outing about a character that wakes up in a 1950’s town with amnesia, was marketed as the most violent game of all time. Despite creative gameplay, it was met with much notoriety and sold poorly – the marketing campaign wasn’t far off either,

*Harvester* certainly was one of the goriest games made at the time and presented disturbing themes no other video game of the mid ‘90s would touch.

*Wolfenstein 3D* (1992) was originally a PC title that relied far more heavily on gameplay than telling an elaborate movie-like story. The initial game in the series, *Castle Wolfenstein*, had been released in 1981 but it wasn’t until 1992 that the franchise came into its own. Cementing the first-person shooter as a mainstay genre, *Wolfenstein 3D* won over a large fanbase with its simplistic story (Hitler creates an army of undead mutants) and fast-paced action.

Meanwhile, the consoles were running strong with an abundance of horror games available. The Super NES struck gold with Activision’s *Alien vs. Predator* (1993), effectively launching a franchise powerhouse that has endured to this day. Allowing players to experience the campaign as a colonial marine, xenomorph alien, and predator, the game was an instant sensation.

The series hit its highpoint in 1999





with Rebellion's PC version aided by the best cutting edge graphics of the time. The most recent incarnation of the *Aliens vs. Predator* games was released in 2010 for the PC, PlayStation 3, and Xbox 360.

Sony Imagesoft acquired the game licenses for Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula* (1992) and Kenneth Branagh's *Frankenstein* (1994). Both were released onto multiple systems. SETA delved into the classic horror

realm with *Nosferatu* (1994), a Super NES action game that had players fighting every monster known to man, including werewolves, gargoyles, zombies, Frankenstein monsters, and zombies.

One of the best horror games to ever grace the Super NES, *Clock Tower* (1995), never made it outside Japan. Loosely based on Dario Argento's *Phenomena* (1985), *Clock Tower* is a 2D psychological horror point-and-click style game. The layout and control scheme was reminiscent of many '90s computer games, but with a format adequate for the Super NES' controller. *Clock Tower* was exceptional in its use of Bobby Barrows aka Scissorman, a horror film-type slasher, who stalks the main character throughout the game. The further success of *Clock Tower II* (1996) led to a North American import on the Sony PlayStation, simply re-titled *Clock Tower*. Future installments in the series were also released out of Japan, including *Clock Tower 3*, showcasing brilliant art design by Keita Amemiya (*Zeiram*) and directed by Kinji Fukasaku (*Battle Royale*).



*Frankenstein*  
(1994).

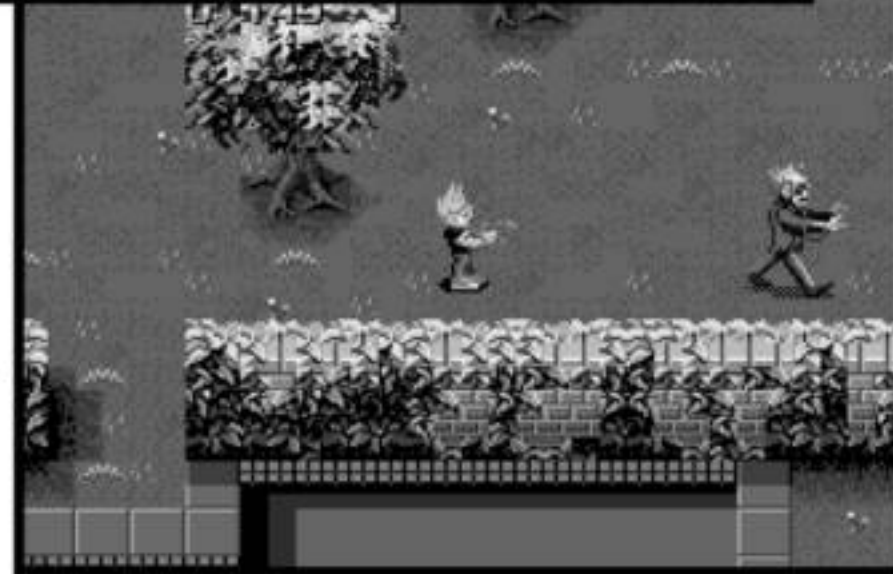


Where Japan was lenient with allowing dark subject matter and graphic representations of violence in their games, North America's Nintendo division was still firmly entrenched in the belief of keeping their games 'family friendly'. LucasArts and Konami found this out in 1993 when they released *Zombies Ate My Neighbors* for the Super NES and Sega Genesis systems. A run and gun game

that played more on humor than anything else, *Zombies Ate My Neighbors* was still a victim of censorship; Nintendo forced LucasArts to remove all instances of blood and gore.



Panasonic's short-lived 3DO system and the Sega Mega CD were early proponents of giving gamers horror movie-inspired thrills



on a home console. *Night Trap* (1992) made use of full-motion video with live actors (including Dana Plato from *Diff'rent Strokes*) and became one of the most controversial games ever released. The plot deals with vampiric creatures – the Augers – who invade a girls' slumber party. The player watches the girls through a network of hidden cameras while trying to capture the Augers in the process. Some scenes involved the girls scantily dressed in nightgowns and being

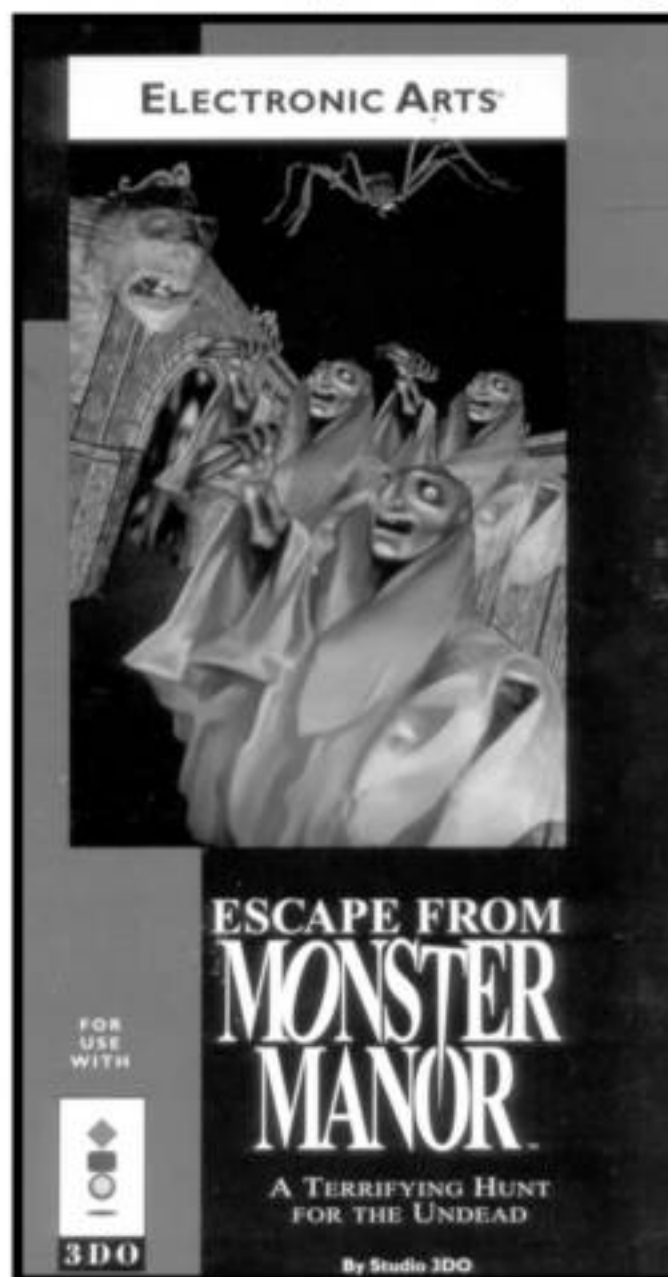




drained of blood, earning intense condemnation at the 1993 Congressional hearings regarding violence in video games. As this was going on major retailers pulled *Night Trap* from shelves and the ESRB (Entertainment Software Rating Board) was formed as a direct result. However, the publicity did little to hurt *Night Trap*'s sales and it was deemed a financial success. Originally released for the Sega Mega CD, *Night Trap* was ported over to the 3DO, Sega 32X, Mac and PC by 1995.

Digital Pictures, the company behind *Night Trap*, tried to work the same magic twice with *Corpse Killer* (1994). Utilizing more full-motion videos with real actors, this zombie game had the player trying to stop the maniacal Dr. Hellman from unleashing his army of zombies upon the world. Matters are complicated when the player is bitten by a zombie and has to forestall their transformation into one of the undead long enough to complete the mission. *Corpse Killer* was directed by John Lafia, who co-wrote *Child's Play* (1988), *Child's Play 2* (1990), along with writing/directing *Man's Best Friend* (1993). Rounding out the production were Bill Moseley (*House of 1,000 Corpses*) and Vincent Schiavelli (*Batman Returns*), each playing significant characters.

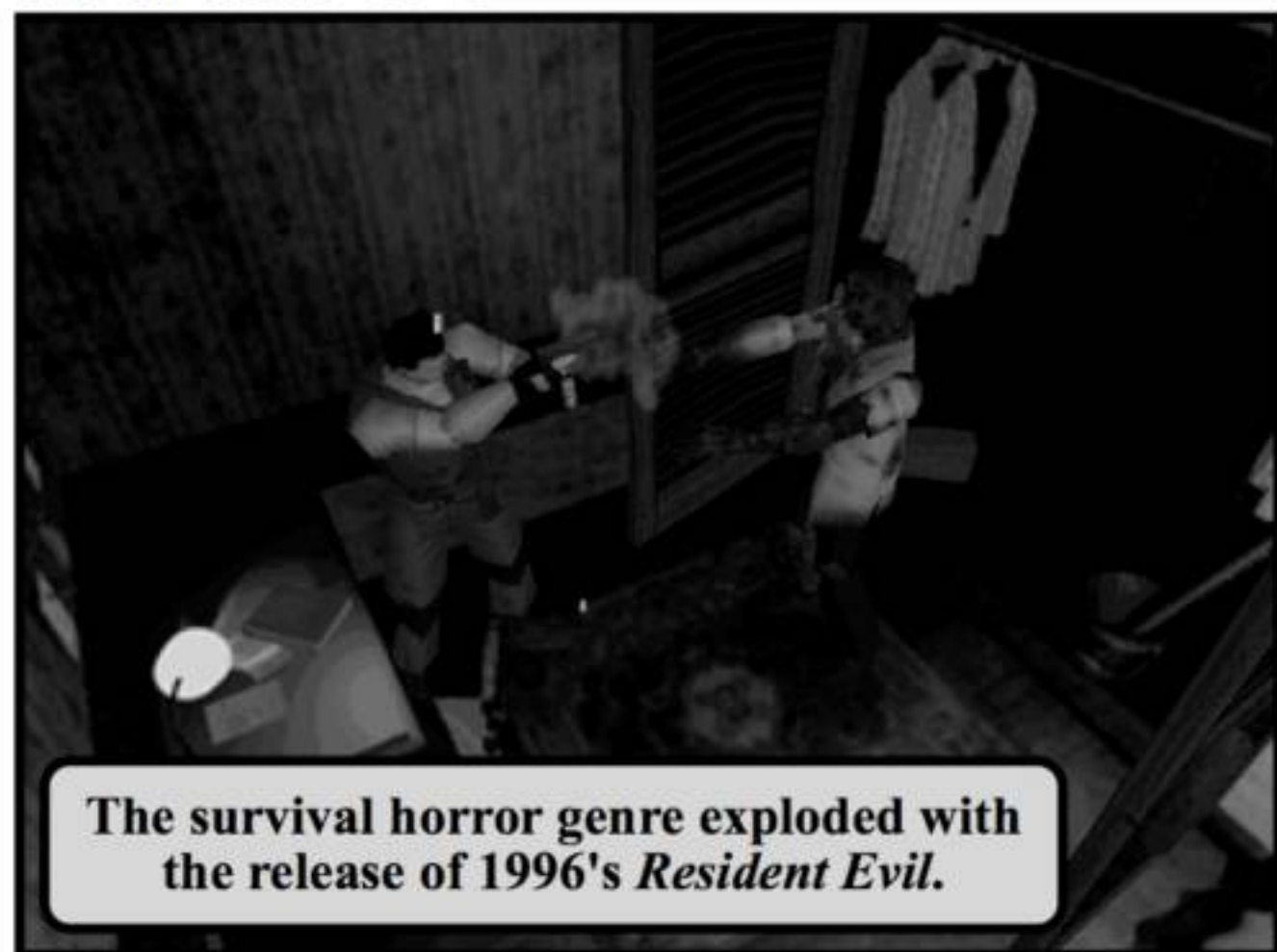
Panasonic's 3DO had a couple of exclusive horror titles to its name: the first-person shooter, *Escape from Monster Manor* (1993) and *Doctor Hauzer* (1994), the first survival horror game to implement a fully three-dimensional virtual environment. *D* (1995), another entrant in the survival horror category, started out as a 3DO exclusive but was later brought over to the Sega Saturn, PlayStation, MS-DOS, and Microsoft Windows.



### EVIL RESIDENTS, SILENT HILLS, AND HOUSES OF THE DEAD

Sony's PlayStation console arrived in 1994, signaling the death knell for many of the earlier systems. The face of video games changed forever in 1996 with Capcom's *Resident Evil*, a survival horror game for the PlayStation that had the player up against what was to become the most prevalent video game adversary ever – zombies.

Selling 2.7 million copies, *Resident Evil* (known as *Biohazard* in Japan), paved the way for *Resident Evil 2* (1998), *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis* (1999), countless other sequels, spin-offs, live-action and animated films, and an excess of







Leon S. Kennedy and Claire Redfield, the protagonists of *Resident Evil 2*.



*Overblood*, a relatively early PlayStation horror game, capitalized on three-dimensional interactive environments. *Nightmare Creatures* (1997) by Activision embraced the fundamentals of Gothic horror while SunSoft offered a first-person survival horror title called *The Note* (1997). Squaresoft's *Parasite Eve* (1998) combined characteristics from both *Resident Evil* and the popular *Final Fantasy* RPG series, and Capcom copied their prior video

merchandise. *Resident Evil* would go on to become the most successful horror video game series of all time. The first game had the player trapped in a mansion battling mutated creatures; future games expanded on this concept, but would typically feature more diverse locations.

Konami sought to emulate the *Resident Evil* formula with *Silent Hill* (1999); by averting the PlayStation's software limitations, the developers immersed the player in a darkly-lit, fog enshrouded landscape that effectively blended survival and psychological horror elements together. Much of the unsettling eeriness of *Silent Hill* stemmed from what the

player *didn't* see. The third-person view and 3D environments hit on *Resident Evil* territory, but the story, verging on parallel dimensions and grotesque monstrosities, landed *Silent Hill* in a category all its own.



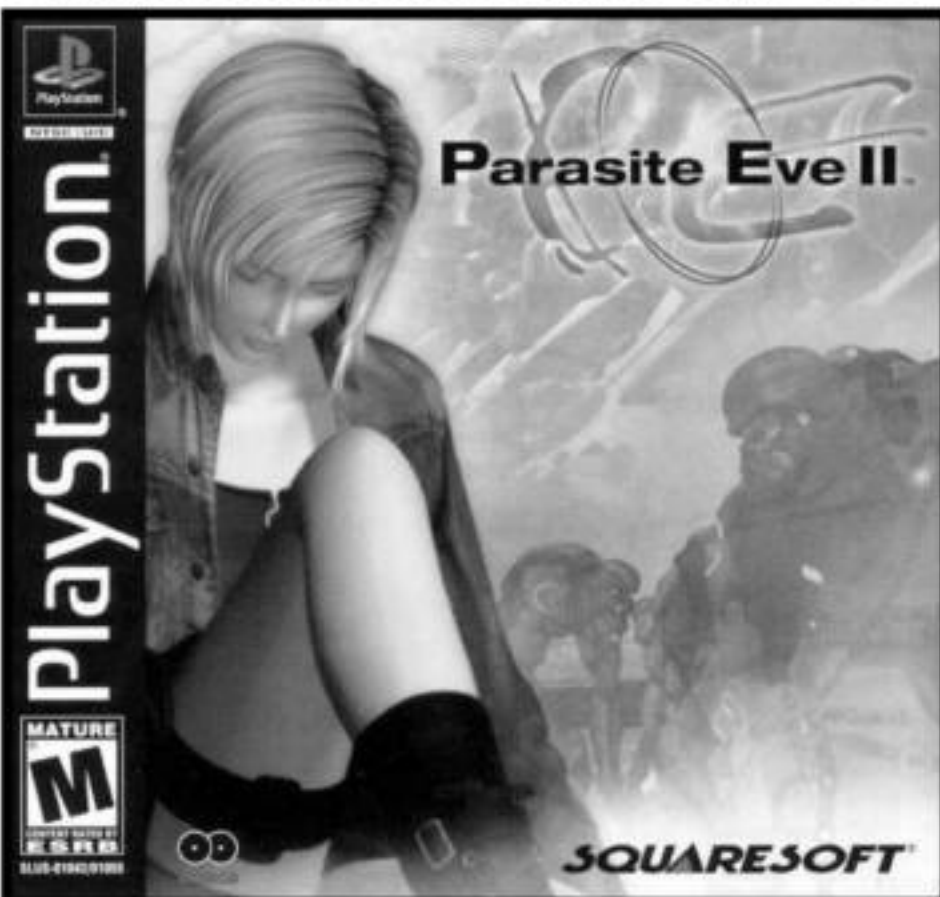
game success to create *Dino Crisis* (1999), replacing zombies with dinosaurs.

Substituting zombies with dinosaurs made *Dino Crisis* a hit with gamers.



The ill-fated Sega Dreamcast console suffered from a short lifespan and most of its survival horror games were ports from the PlayStation. However, one of the

system's few exclusives in the subgenre was *Blue Stinger* (1999), a third-person action game that did away with the stationary 'fixed camera' angles of many other early survival horror games. *The Ring: Terror's Realm*, predating the American movie remake of Japan's *Ringu*, would arrive on the Dreamcast in 2000 along with *Carrier*,



The late '90s signified the golden age of the survival horror subgenre and soon every major video game publisher was scrambling to release their own similar title. 1996's





the only survival horror game ever set on a nuclear powered aircraft carrier. The last hurrah for the Dreamcast's horror line-up was *Illbleed* (2001), a gory game that takes place inside a horror-theme park.

As the new millennium approached the arcade scene in North America dwindled, despite continuing to be a viable moneymaker in Japan. Even so, arcades everywhere were buzzing with excitement because of Sega's *House of the Dead* (1997), a light-gun arcade game with zombies. By 1998 it was ported to the Sega Saturn and PC. That same year *House of the Dead II* blasted its way into arcades and made it to the Dreamcast by '99. Sega has been releasing sequels ever since.



**Left/Above:**  
*House of the Dead III*  
proved to be  
one of the  
most  
profitable  
entries in the  
*House* series.

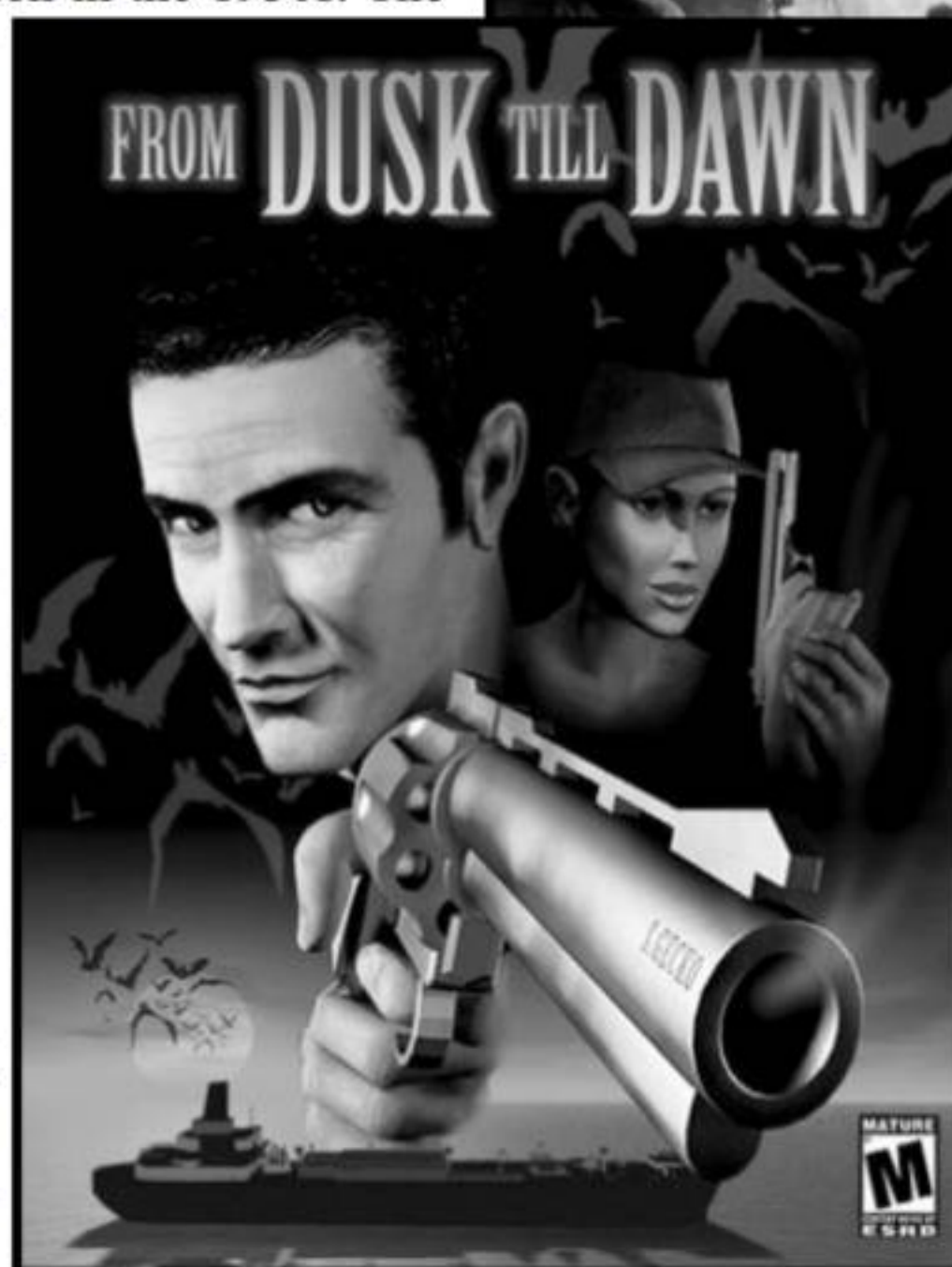
## INTERACTIVE NIGHTMARES

The PC had some survival horror titles in the late '90s like *System Shock 2* (1999) and *Nocturne* (1999), a game focusing on President Roosevelt creating a secret monster hunting organization in the 1930s. The trend continued into the early 2000's with *The Blair Witch Project* (2000), a three-volume computer game that detailed the backstory of the 1999 film. Filmmaker Clive Barker released *Undying* (2001) for the PC and although it was critically acclaimed, it met with poor sales. Barker dabbled in the video game realm again in 2007 with *Jericho* (released on the PC and home consoles), but earned mixed reviews. In 2001 PC gamers had their chance to battle vampires in *From Dusk Till Dawn*, a first-person shooter and sequel to the original movie released in '96. More bloodsuckers arrived on computer monitors in 2003 for *Nosferatu: The Wrath of Malachi*, an atmospheric title that mashed Bram Stoker's *Dracula* with F.W.



**Nosferatu:**  
*The Wrath*  
*of*  
*Malachi.*

Murnau's silent movie masterpiece, *Nosferatu*. *Universal Monsters: Monsterville* (2002) marked the first – and only – time Universal's iconic movie monsters were given the video game treatment. This comical outing gave fans the opportunity to play as twelve different monsters including Dracula, the Wolfman, the Mummy, Frankenstein's Monster, the Creature from the Black Lagoon, and the Metaluna Mutant. Recently, game developer Bigpoint has announced that they are working on *Universal Monsters Online*, a free-to-play massively multiplayer online game (MMOG). No definite release date has yet been announced.



Entering the 2000's meant that a new generation of video game consoles would be making their debut on the market. The PlayStation 2 (PS2), Xbox, and Nintendo GameCube became the latest batch of dominant systems. As with the '80s, movie-based horror games made something of a revival. *The Thing*, a video game sequel to John Carpenter's 1982 film was welcomed by fans and critics alike in 2002. Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* received a new lease on life with *Jaws Unleashed*





*Evil Dead* enthusiasts were able to revisit Ash's exploits (complete with voiceover work by Bruce Campbell) in *Evil Dead: Hail to the King* (2000), *Evil Dead: A Fistful of Boomstick* (2003), and *Evil Dead: Regeneration* (2005). A point-and-click *X-Files* adventure game had been released onto the PC and PlayStation back in the late '90s, but in 2004 a survival horror variation using the *Resident Evil* game engine made it to the PS2 under the name *The X-Files: Resist or Serve*.



Capcom's *Devil May Cry* (2001), a hack and slash title, was originally supposed to be *Resident Evil 4* but the developers took the game into an entirely different direction. The *Silent Hill* series continued turning out one sequel after another on the PS2 and the PlayStation Portable (PSP). In 2008 *Silent Hill Homecoming* made the leap to current generation consoles: the PlayStation 3

### Jaws Unleashed.



for the PS2, Xbox, and PC finally allowing gamers to play as the man-eating shark.

table system's catalog – at least for Japanese gamers. *Corpse Party*, a survival horror adventure about kids trapped in a haunted school, was developed on the RPG Maker software back in 1996. Sequels

followed, including *Corpse Party: Blood Covered* (2010), the first in the series to get an English translation and release in North America on the



### Evil Dead: Hail to the King.

Sequels of past games, some nearly forgotten, would see a striking resurgence as well. *Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare* (2001) and *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* (2007) were only two of the many titles to get sequels after nearly a decade of silence. Follow-ups to popular franchise games were under constant development too.



(PS3) and Xbox 360. A year later, *Silent Hill: Shattered Memories* arrived on the Nintendo Wii. The eighth (and latest) installment, *Silent Hill: Downpour*, went to the PS3 and Xbox 360 in 2012.

The PSP was never known for its wide selection of horror games, but the *Corpse Party* series managed to add a few titles to the portable system's catalog – at least for Japanese gamers.



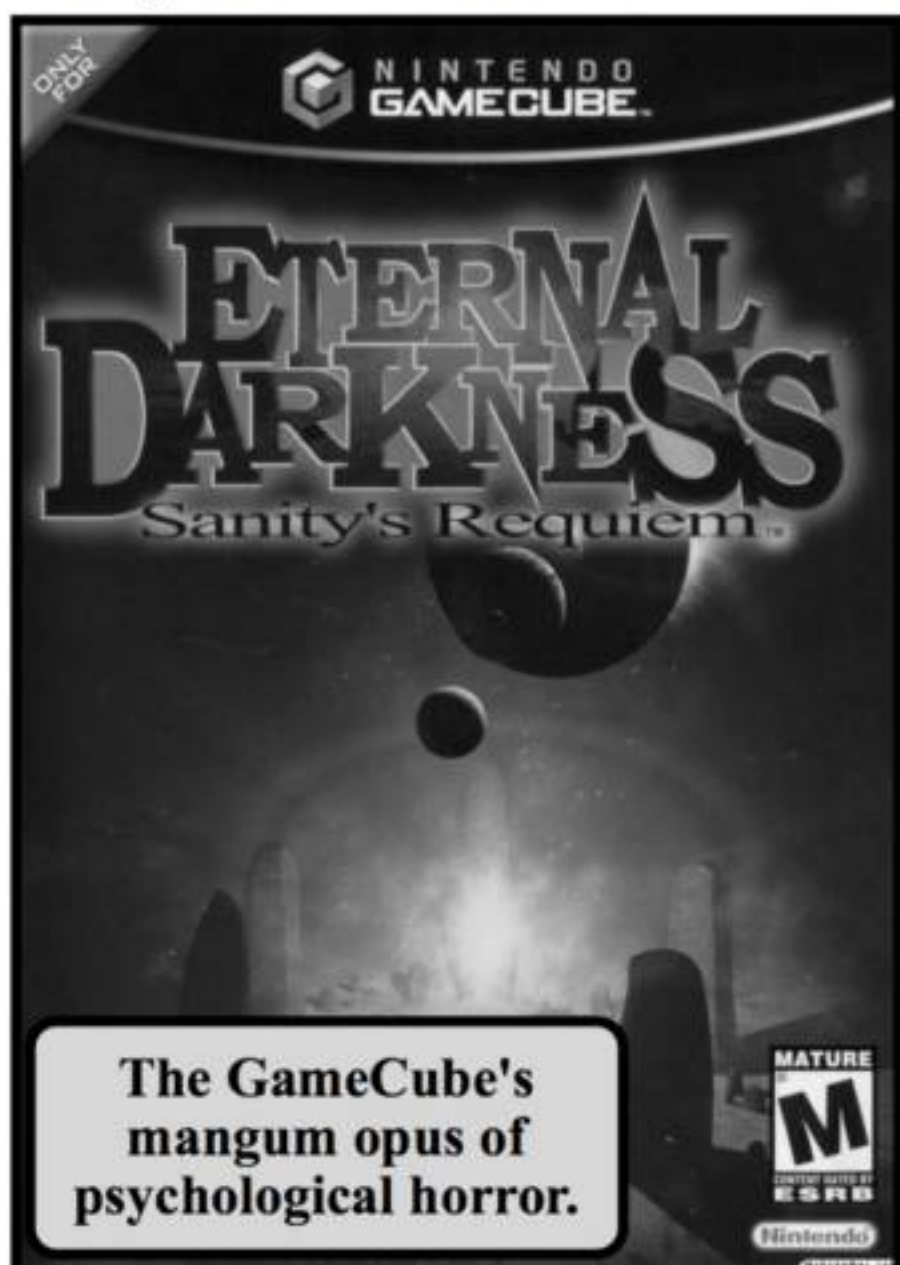


PSP (via download only). With grisly death scenes, countless alternate endings and multiple characters, the *Corpse Party* series has continued to thrive in Japan with the latest PSP game, *Book of Shadows*, released in 2011, and an ongoing manga series being published regularly by Square Enix.

## EVOLUTION: CAN SURVIVAL HORROR SURVIVE?

As with any booming fad, there's always a tendency for over-saturation – and many gamers found the survival horror subgenre to be growing stagnant by the '00s. New twists were added to the formula, sparking innovative gameplay elements and alleviating the mundane clichés of the past. For example, *Fatal Frame* (2001) was centered on the player exploring a haunted mansion armed with nothing more than a camera. The only way to defeat any vengeful spirits one might encounter was to take a photo of them. *Fatal Frame*'s distinctive gameplay made it a hit, leading to sequels for multiple consoles. In another instance, *Siren* (2003) for the PlayStation 2 added the ability to 'sightjack' and see from the perspectives of both human allies and enemy 'shibito'. 2005's *F.E.A.R.* concentrated on pure psychological horror instead of monsters leaping out from darkened corners and transitory 'jump scares'.

Early on, the Nintendo GameCube was considered a 'child-friendly' gaming alternative in comparison to the more mature games being churned out on the PS2 and Xbox. It's a difficult claim to refute, considering 2001's *Luigi's Mansion* was about as 'horror' as the GameCube dared to venture. That changed in 2002 with a remake of the original *Resident*



The GameCube's  
mangum opus of  
psychological horror.

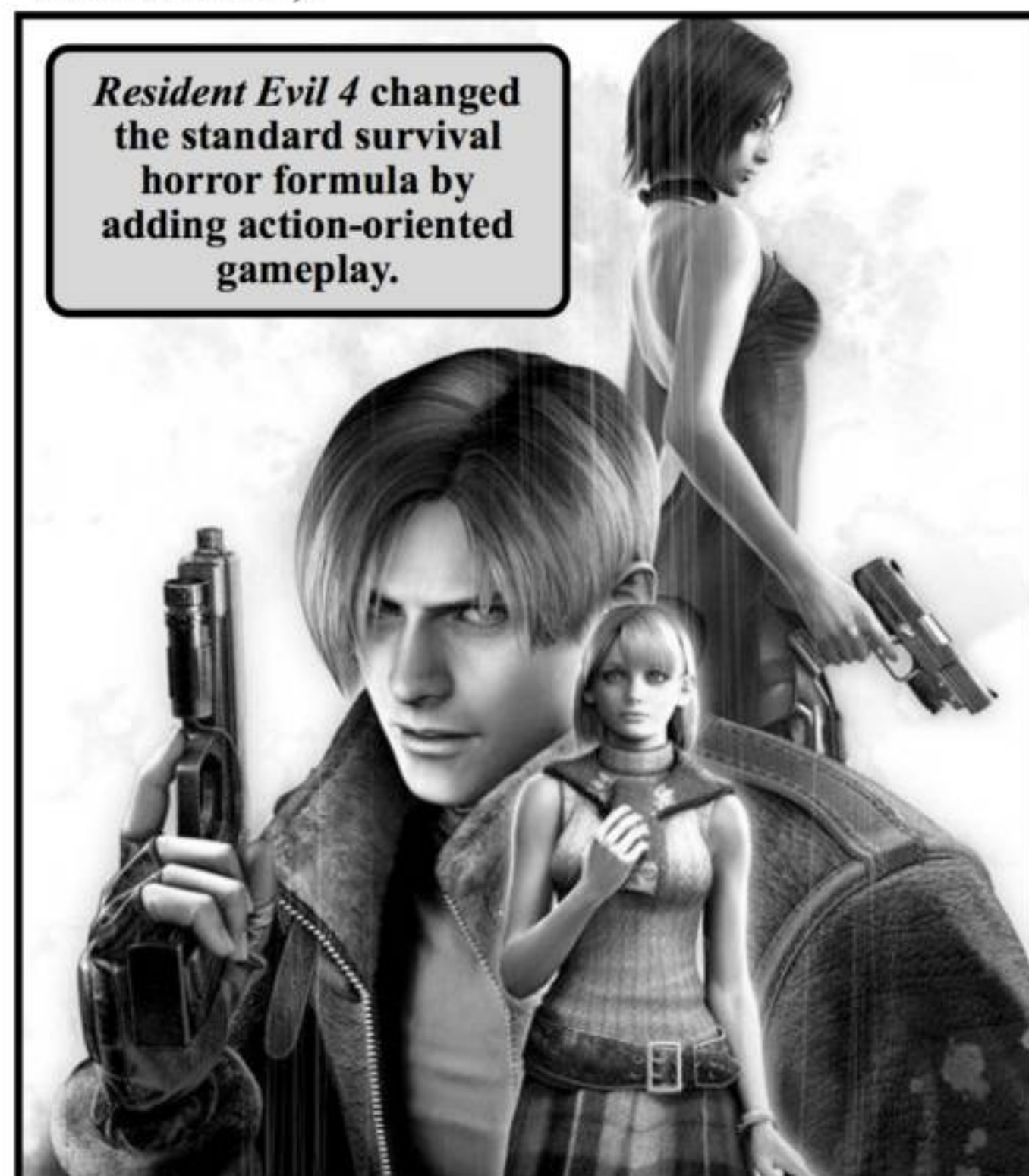
*Evil* and one of the greatest horror titles to ever be released, *Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem*. Taking place in various historical settings, *Eternal Darkness* does far more than just immerse the player in the game. Not your typical survival horror entry, *Eternal Darkness*

succeeded in breaking the fourth wall and penetrating the realm of psychological horror by toying with the gamer's mind. The player-controlled character is equipped with a 'sanity meter' and as the gauge is depleted psychological aberrations begin to occur. These include bleeding ceilings, sounds of footsteps, screaming, doors slamming, seeing monsters that aren't really there, tilted screens, and more. The real thrills come when the game directly tries to unbalance the player by lowering and raising the game's volume, muting the TV, turning the screen black, claiming to erase the memory card's files after you try to save your progress, flashing 'to be continued' screens, sporadic subliminal messages, and phony game resets among many other creative gimmicks.



*Fatal Frame 3.*

villagers. The following *Resident Evil* games would continue to imitate these new elements. In a peculiar marketing move, Capcom released *Resident Evil 4* to the GameCube prior to the PlayStation 2 (it later appear on the Wii as well).





Regardless of the GameCube's foray into unadulterated horror, the PS2 ruled the genre with an iron controller. Two PS2 titles, *Haunting Ground* (2005) and *Rule of Rose* (2006), depended on the player's relationship with a canine companion to survive a progression of horrific situations. Yet, no game relied on the powers of communication more heavily than



*Lifeline* (2003) where the player has to aid Rio, a hapless waitress onboard a monster infested space station, by means of 'speech recogni-



tion'. Instead of moving a character by standard game controller, all actions are conducted by the player giving vocal commands to Rio over a USB headset.

Other games sought a distinctive edge over the competition by pushing boundaries of graphic violence and disturbing content. *The Suffering* (2004), the tale of a death row inmate battling monsters, was a gruesome assault on the senses and, a year later, *The Suffering: Ties That Bind*, continued this blood-drenched trend (visual effects artist Stan Winston designed the monsters for both games). *Manhunt* (2003) reveled in uncensored brutality that strived for 'realism' and was banned in several countries, while the equally graphic *Condemned: Criminal Origins* (2005) was banned in Germany. *Saw: The Game* (2009) and its follow-up *Saw: Flesh & Blood* (2010), based on the popular *Saw* film series, struck up their own share of controversy for scenes deemed 'sadistic' and 'sick' by many media outlets.



Some horror games resisted change, imitating prior hits with only slight variations and when creepy, shadow-covered mansions grew tiresome, outer space proved to be a satisfactory alternative. *Run Like Hell: Hunt or Be Hunted* (2002), for the PS2 and Xbox, was developed as 'Resident Evil in space' but after a lengthy and troublesome production period it became an action-oriented title. *Run Like Hell* is noteworthy for its diverse voice cast, comprised of Lance Henriksen, Brad Dourif, Michael Ironside, Thomas F. Wilson, Clancy Brown, and Kate Mulgrew.



*Echo Night: Beyond* (2004), a PS2 exclusive, was a sci-fi ghost story set in the 'not too distant future' on a space station. *Echo Night* was a unique divergence from its horror brethren since it used a first-person perspective but lacked any firearms. In most cases the player had to run away from any ghostly enemies in order to survive.

Third-person shooter, *Dead Space* (2008) found the player waging war against the Necromorphs, corpses reanimated by an alien virus aboard an interstellar mining ship. A sequel followed,







**Dead Space.**

along with two side-games, two animated films, a novel, and a comic book prequel.

If the reaches of outer space provided the nightmarish atmosphere for a video game's backdrop, so could the murky depths of the ocean – proven in 2007's *BioShock*. A first-person shooter, *BioShock* tossed the player into an underwater city ravaged by plasmid-enhanced humans called Splicers.

With the current generation of consoles, motion gaming has been pushed to the forefront as an increasingly popular feature. Each of the major systems has their own variation: the PS Move for the PlayStation 3 and the Kinect for the Xbox 360, while the Wii is a console inherently designed around motion controls.

In 2009 alone the Wii received three horror games with heavy emphasis on motion controls, *Cursed Mountain*, *The Calling*, and *Ju-on: The Grudge* – billed as a 'haunted house simulator'. *Rise of Nightmares* (2011) became the Xbox 360's first mature 'M' rated Kinect game and the child-friendly *Haunt* arrived to the Xbox Live Arcade in 2012. The PlayStation 3 had three Move-compatible horror titles to arrive on their online PlayStation Network service in the last few years with *Dead Space: Extraction* in 2011, and *House of the Dead 3/House of the Dead 4* in 2012.



**Rise of Nightmares.**

We've covered the vast majority of horror video games out there, but no history would ever be complete without touching upon the largest gaming trend of the '00s – yes, we're talking about the flesh-eating undead – zombies. These reanimated ghouls have served Hollywood well, but they've also chewed their way into the hearts and minds of gamers everywhere.

Aside from the *Resident Evil* games, the early '00s were rather quiet on the zombie video game front, so it's only fitting that George Romero be the one to kick off the ghoulish festivities. *Road to Fiddler's Green*, a prequel based on Romero's *Land of the Dead*, was released in 2005 – the same year as the film. This low budget first-person shooter was met by very negative reviews. *Stubbs the Zombie in Rebel without a Pulse* (2005), a comedy-horror game, garnered more favorable reviews and tossed the genre on its head by casting the player as the zombie.

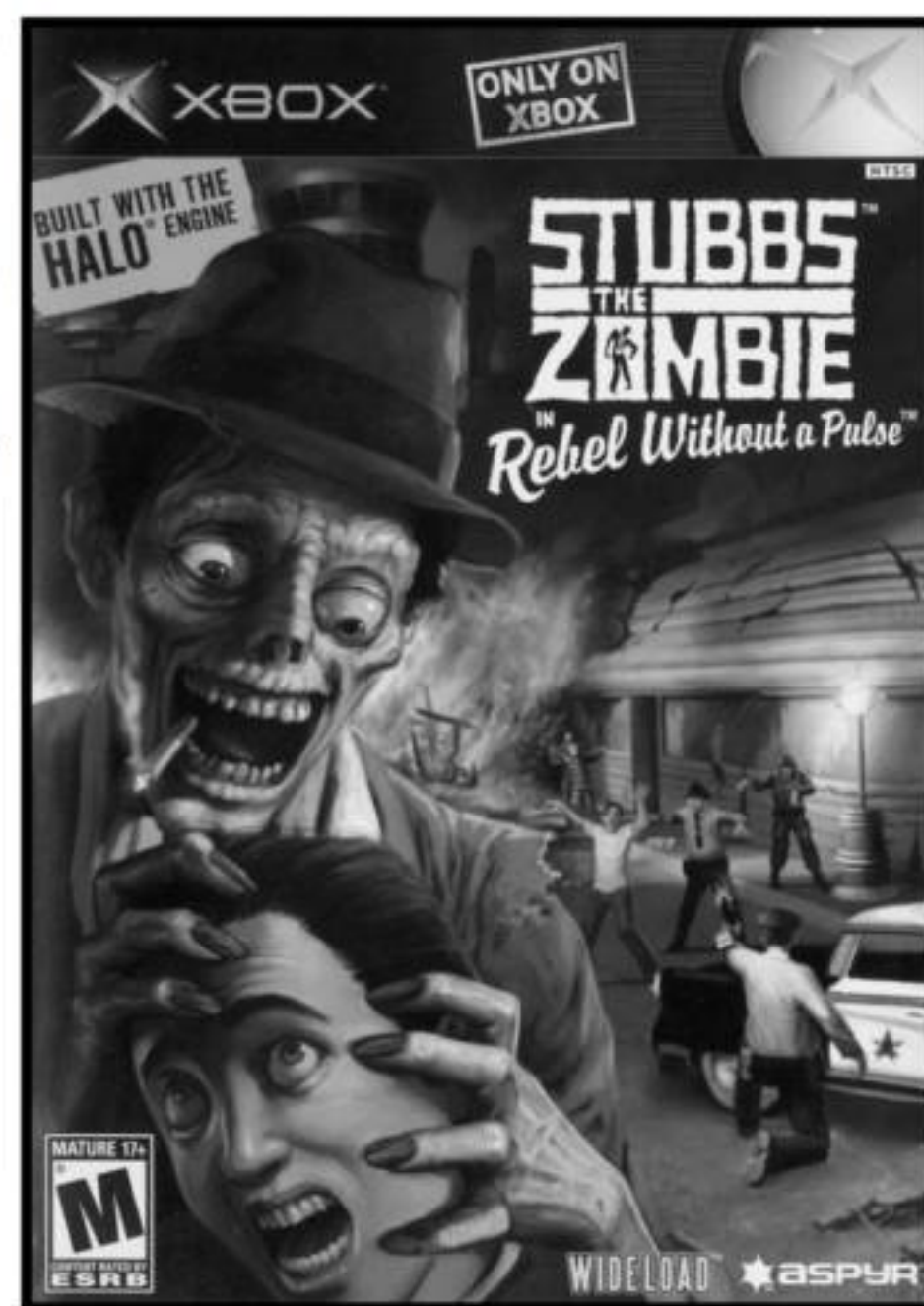
*Dead Rising* (2006) lifted much from *Dawn of the Dead* by having the player warding off



**BioShock.**

zombies in a shopping

mall. It went on to inspire a remake, *Dead Rising: Chop Till You Drop* (2009), for the Nintendo Wii, and a sequel in 2010 for the Xbox 360, PS3 and PC. Whereas *Dead Rising* had a playful atmosphere, *Left 4 Dead* (2008) took the gritty road and had players blowing apart zombies in this taut first-person shooter that relied on teamwork and cooperation. A year later *Left 4 Dead 2* made its debut.



**Dead Rising.**

*Call of Duty* stands as one of the most profitable video game franchises ever created; the military-themed first-person shooter included a Nazi zombie mini-game in 2008's *Call of Duty: World at War*. It turned out to be such a popular addition that *Call of Duty: Black Ops* (2010) incorporated several zombie maps with special



characters like Robert Englund, Sarah Michelle Gellar, Michael Rooker, Danny Trejo, and George Romero.

The wild west game *Red Dead Redemption* (2010) trailed *Call of Duty's* example by offering downloadable content that had more than its fair share of zombies, aptly dubbed *Undead Nightmare*. It was later released in stores as a stand-alone title complete with its own alternate side-story to the main game.

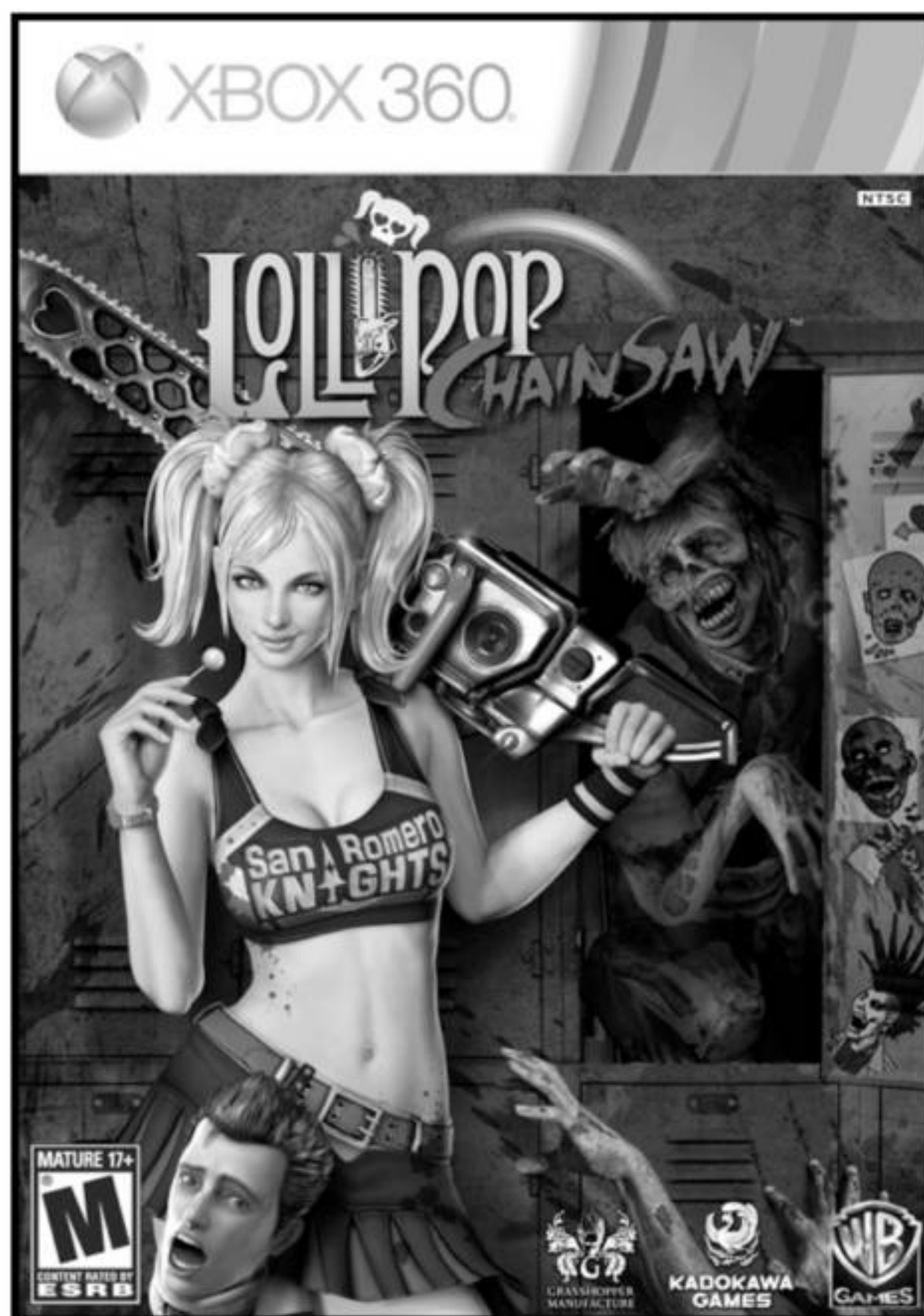


*Red Dead Redemption:  
Undead Nightmare.*

Cities are never a wise choice to visit during a zombie outbreak and, apparently, neither are islands. *Dead Island* (2011), a first-person open world game had the undead relentlessly persuing the player on a remote island with minimum weapons for defense.

*Zombie Apocalypse*, a downloadable shoot 'em

up was released onto the PlayStation 3 and Xbox 360 in 2009 and *Dead Nation* (2010), yet



another download-only game, was kept exclusive to the PS3. Two of the most recent zombie offerings available are *Lollipop Chainsaw* (2012), a light-hearted hack and slash game about a zombie-killing cheerleader, and *The Walking Dead* (2012), an episodic adventure game (inspired by the graphic novels and AMC television series) released in downloadable installments.

## FUTURE FRIGHTS

Horror video games have evolved drastically since their inception – and so has the ever-changing hardware to play them on. One is left to wonder, how will horror games *further* evolve in the future? As we wait, the new generation of consoles looms large on the horizon and home computers are becoming increasingly more advanced with new graphic cards. Whatever the case, it's certain that the industry will continue to expand and the lines between games and films are sure to blur more, offering gamers the ultimate experience in interactive terror.

Check back next issue for *Shadowland's* look at the unreleased *Hellraiser: Virtual Hell* video game, with exclusive interviews!



*The Walking Dead.*



# NERD TALK

## AN INTERVIEW WITH JAMES ROLFE,

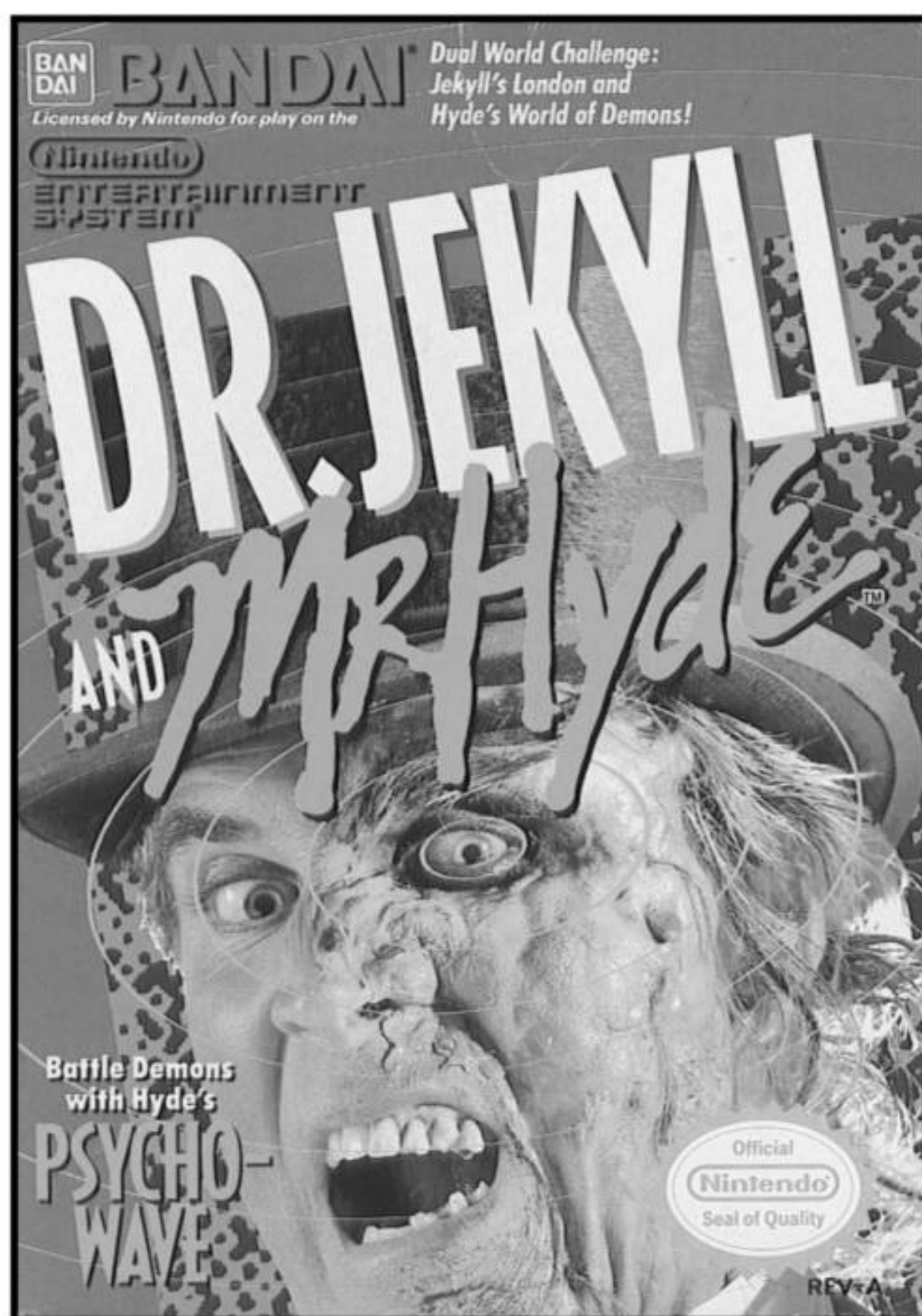
## THE ANGRY VIDEO GAME NERD



*Some video games provide phenomenal experiences that are not soon forgotten, while others can try even the toughest gamer's patience. James Rolfe, the creator and star of The Angry Video Game Nerd web series, is no stranger to awful games. Focusing on reviewing the worst that retro video-gamedom has to offer, The Angry Video Game Nerd concept began in 2004 and amassed a large following in 2006 when the episodes were uploaded onto YouTube. Now with over 100 episodes to his credit and well into his sixth season, Rolfe continues to create videos featuring some of the industry's most horrid game offerings.*

**SHADOWLAND MAGAZINE:** Anyone familiar with the exploits of the Angry Video Game Nerd will know that you've played some of the worst video games imaginable. But if you had to pick some of the very worst games from the horror genre, which ones would you choose?

**JAMES ROLFE:** Off the top of my head, most of the worst horror games I know I already reviewed as the Nerd like *Friday the 13th* and *Nightmare on Elm Street* (both on NES). Those games did have some innovative touches and were fun to play in their day, but their flaws don't hold up well today. The one game that I keep going back to, that is quite possibly the worst game I ever played in my life is *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (NES). It was just as horrible when I first played it as a kid. That's the true test, when the game was never good to begin with. Admittedly, there's a learning curve,

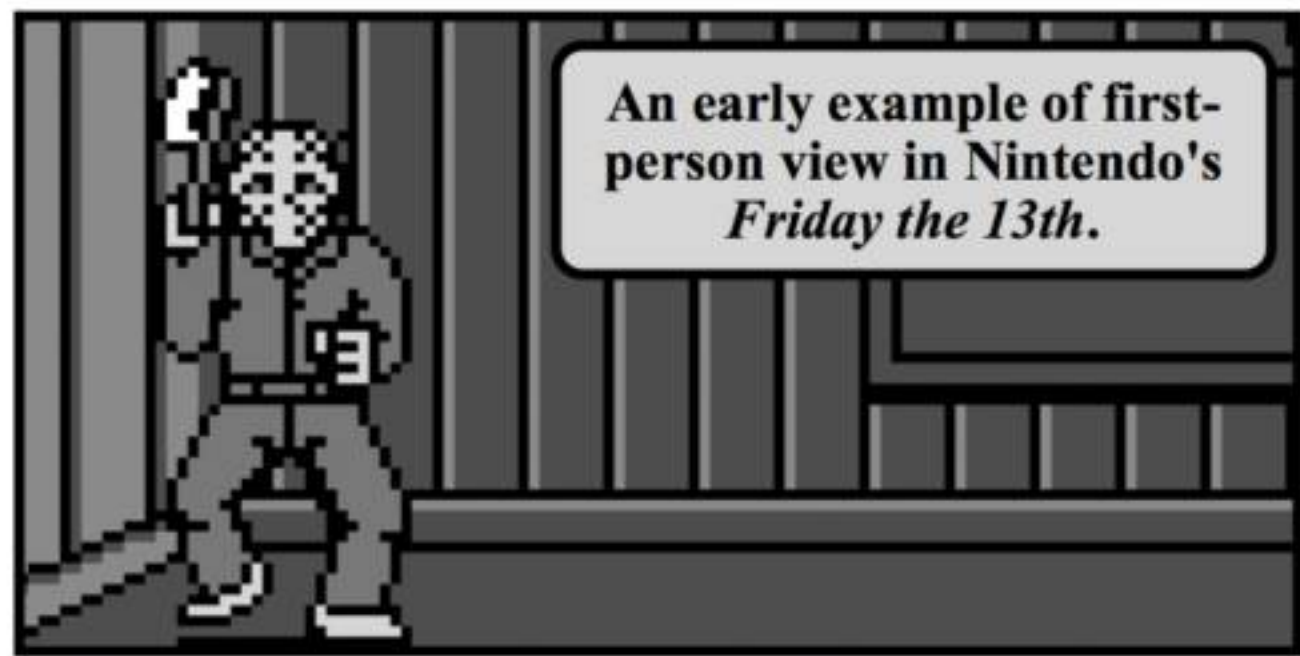


but once you figure out how to play it, that's when you realize how badly designed it is. It may be the most frustrating gameplay experience of all time. I can't do it justice. Play it for yourself and see.

**SM:** Alternatively, which titles would you pick for some of the best horror video games?

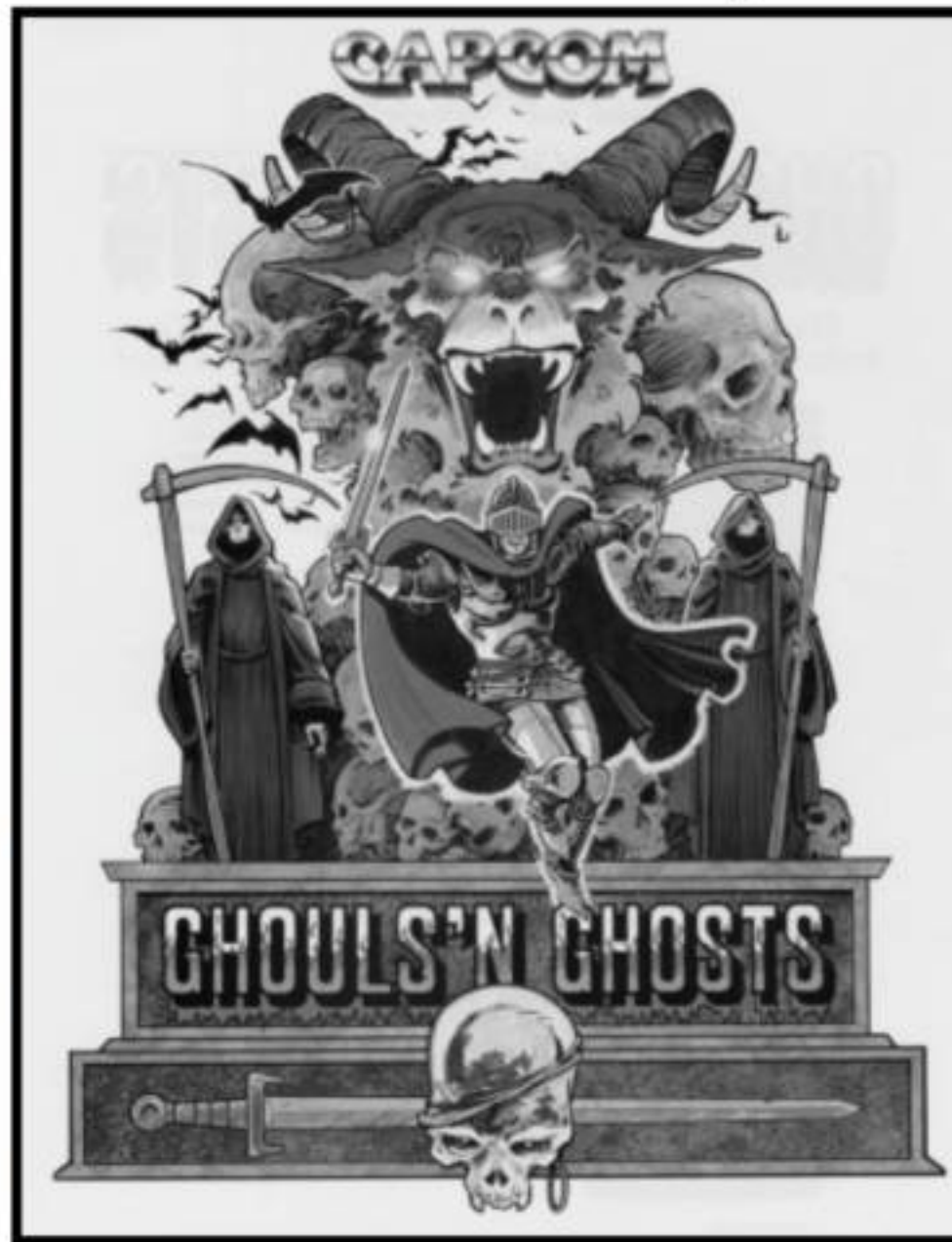
**JR:** *Castlevania 4* (SNES) is probably my favorite. It





in the cabin, it switches to a semi-first person view and you never know when Jason Voorhees is about to pop out. It's all about feeling like you're there. Post-*Resident Evil* games have perfected this formula. Another thing is atmosphere. It doesn't have to be horrific and shock-

isn't exactly a SCARY horror game, but it's reminiscent of classic gothic horror films. I remember the PC game *Doom* as being very monumental to the horror gaming genre. It was the first game that made me feel scared. I felt as if I was the character in the game and that my own life was on the line. Intense. All the three-dimensional horror games that came later got even scarier, but they're a little bit past my generation. I mostly enjoy a good sidescroller with an even challenge. There's many of its kind like *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*. Also, check out *Nosferatu* (also on SNES) which is an interesting creepy *Prince of Persia*-style game. You run around punching monsters in the face! How bold.



ing. It could be like *Castlevania 4*. The 16-bit graphics were impressive in their day. It was a big deal to see such layered scenery. A cluster of bats fly by in the distant background. Pillars wipe the screen in the foreground. Gnarled vines. Fog. Creepy music. It all combines



to make a chilling atmosphere. *Super Metroid* (SNES) isn't really considered a horror game, but it gives you a claustrophobic feeling of solitude and survival, very much like the environment in the movie *Alien* (1979). The overall world the game creates is what makes it a great horror-themed game. As for what makes it bad, the control has to be smooth. It has to feel responsive and natural like you're actually there. If the emphasis is more on shocks and show than

**SM:** What would you consider to be the key ingredients to making a good horror game? What makes for a bad one?

**JR:** If the game is scary, I suppose it's succeeded. Making the game in first-person view is a good start. *Doom* was scary because you see what the character sees and you never know what's lurking around the corner. Even *Friday the 13th* on NES was kind of scary for its time. When you're





on good gameplay, then that could be bad.

**SM:** Do you feel that horror-themed games have improved or taken a dive in recent years?

**JR:** Once games became 3D, I lost my touch. In the first *Resident Evil* game, I ran around in circles like an idiot. I think, yes, from what I've seen, they've improved. It's me who hasn't. I just don't have the same free time as I used to.

**SM:** Are there any horror movie franchises that you think could make for a decent modern video game?

**JR:** Well they made *Evil Dead* into a game. I'm not sure where to go after that. I bet there's tons though, if I really thought about it hard. I suppose a big question is, are you the victim trying to survive, or are you the monster/killer? For example, take the games made by Wizard Video for the Atari 2600, *Halloween* and *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. Two completely different takes. In *Halloween*, you're trying to get away from Michael Myers, but in *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, you actually play as Leatherface cutting people up. How about a remake of those games?

**SM:** Can you tell us a little about your current project, *The Angry Video Game Nerd: The Movie*. Has filming wrapped? When can AVGN fans expect to see the film?

**JR:** It's a passion project made only possible by the fans of the web series. The Angry Video Game Nerd traditionally reviews bad games that frustrated him as a child. The movie centers around the "worst game of all time" *E.T.* for the Atari 2600. The game was so poorly received, Atari supposedly buried 2 million unsold cartridges of the game in a desert landfill in New Mexico. Since then, it's become sort of like a treasure hunt for gamers over the years. We're approaching the game's 30th anniversary which makes it a perfect time to lampoon the story of the landfill and create our own work of fiction around it. It's sort of like a road trip comedy with some science fiction thrown in. The movie is independently produced, funded entirely by the fans. It's the fans to thank for making it possible and for keeping alive the lore in the infamous *E.T.* game for so long. Most of the key scenes have already been filmed, but there's a lot left to go. I'm hoping to have a trailer ready by the end of the summer/early Fall. We're hoping the finished film will be ready by next year. Only time will tell. Check in at [Cinemassacre.com](http://Cinemassacre.com) for updates.

*Shadowland Magazine* would like to thank Mr. Rolfe for taking the time for this interview!

Original early '80s print advertisements for Wizard Video's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Halloween* and *Flesh Gordon* (cancelled) Atari games.

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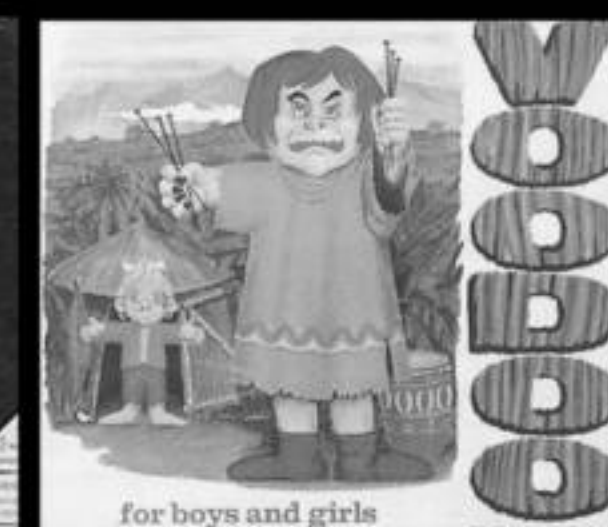
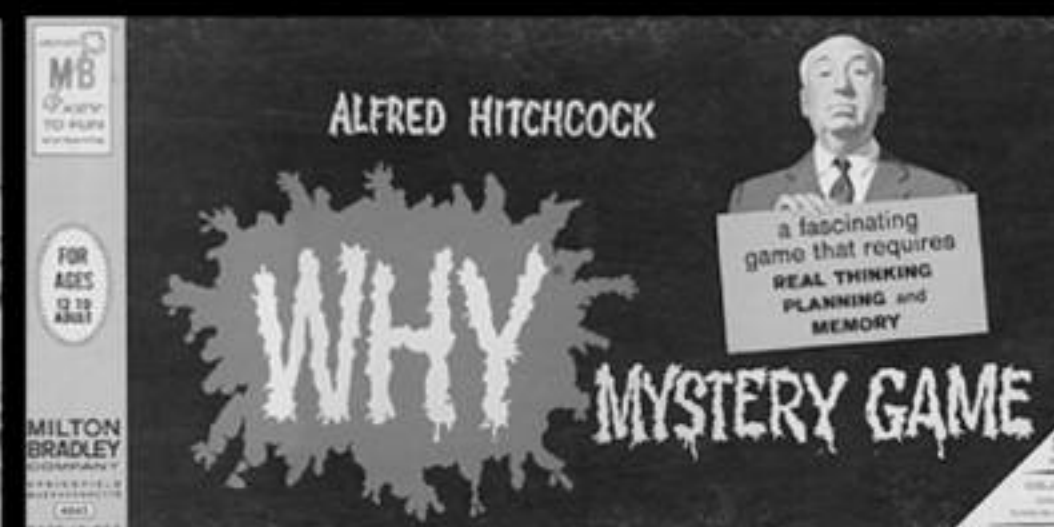
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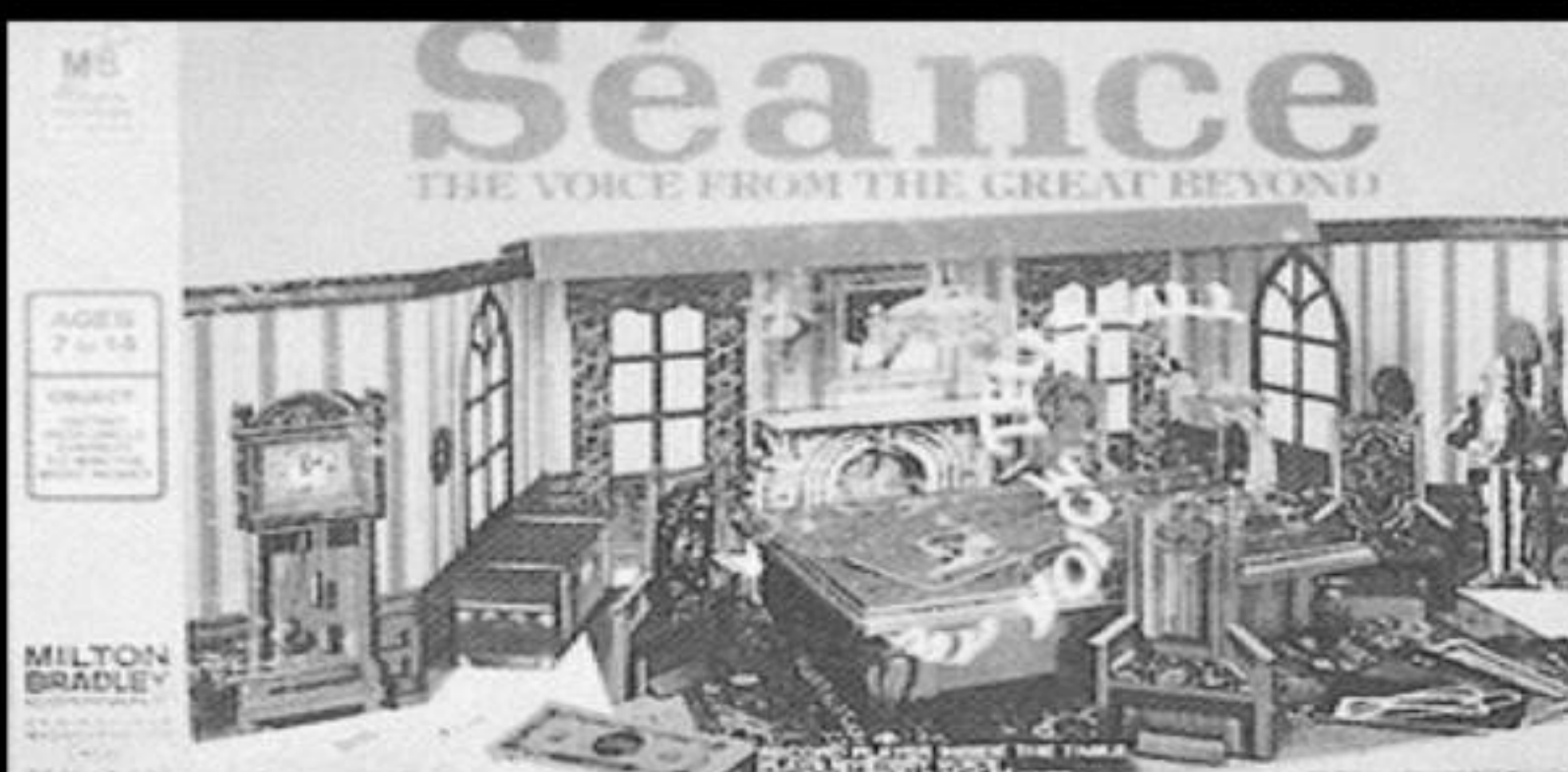
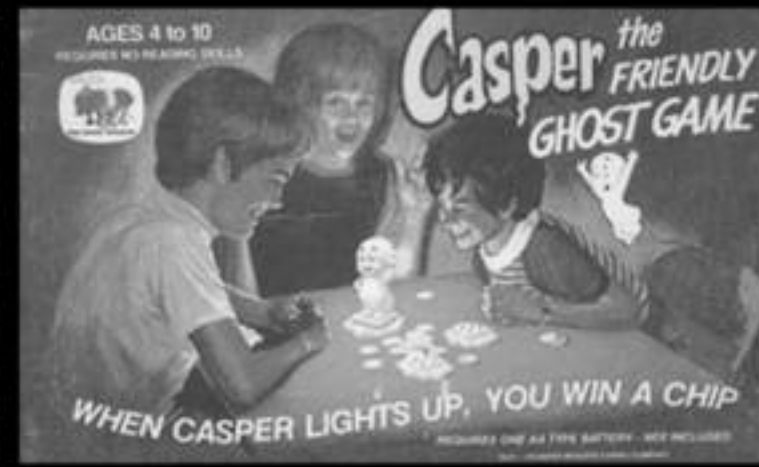
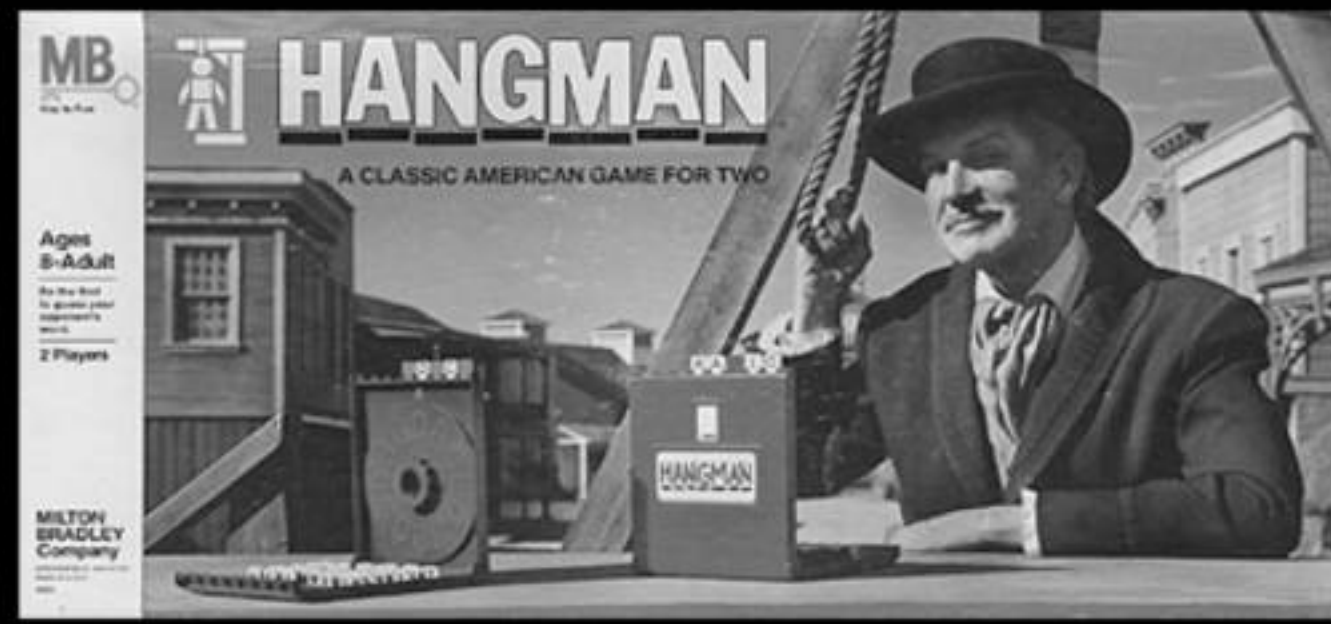
# HORROR BOARD GAMES













# SO SHOCKING... SO DISTURBING... HUDSON HORROR SHOW

By Dustin LaValley

Each year since 2010, Tad Leger and Chris Alo organize a horror film festival that showcases classics within the horror genres on the big screen in their original 35mm print. During the breaks between each film are classic trailers and those who remain in their seats are open to giveaways for answering trivia questions. In May of 2011 the third Hudson Horror Show took place in Poughkeepsie, New York – a city upstate known for its gritty, big city feel and its scenic passenger bridge over the Hudson River. It's also known as the former home of serial killer Kendall Francois, sentenced to life for the murder of eight female prostitutes after authorities found many of the bodies in his home on September 2nd, 1998. He is currently incarcerated in the famed Attica Correctional Facility. Having now learned of this city's most notorious resident, it's fitting that a festival such as Hudson Horror Show be placed within its limits.

Being a horror fan from childhood and luckily being able to work within the field as a writer, I was needless to say overly excited when news of the first Hudson Horror was announced to take place two hours south. From the first show I realized that this festival was different, it had no major backing and was put together on a shoestring budget by two devoted horror fans, Tad and Chris. Over the next few shows fans were treated to such classics as *Halloween*, *Evil Dead* & *Evil Dead II*, *Zombie*, *Pieces*, *Demons*, *The Gates of Hell*, *Cannibal Ferox*, and on May 14th, 2011 the films *Cannibal Holocaust* and *Return of the Living Dead* were headliners.

Now sadly there are those who have not had the delight of sitting in a theater for twelve hours watching classic horror films in their gritty, crackling 35mm original prints. Tad and Chris

will have none of that digital gobbledygook that's ruining the tone and atmosphere of other festivals. Hudson Horror Show fans are shown the film the way it's meant to be seen, how it was seen twenty-five, thirty years ago when it premiered. And for those of you who have not been to a film festival, particularly one as unique and true as Hudson Horror Show, what follows is the "Day-in-the-life" of my girlfriend and photographer, Ashley and my own self that Saturday.

We arrived late Friday night, early in the A.M. of Saturday and after a long day and drive, relaxed in the bubbling hot tub before settling into bed. (Yes, even horror fiends can have a romantic side.) After I dazedly made it out of bed and showered, we made our way to the show. Even though we arrived early, the line was out the door and this put a smile on my face, knowing that Hudson Horror Show was spreading like a venereal disease on a college campus. On first appearance it was seen that the festival had taken on that of a small convention with several tables and booths of book and comic books sellers, t-shirts, the Grindhouse Releasing table Tad runs and the star of the convention side of the show, Dead Memories. This is a green-screen photo booth which situates you in numerous locations under attack by zombies. Dead Memories supplies you with weapons from flyswatter to pump action shotguns... Sweet!







With two handshakes I greeted Tad and Chris both of whom were running around amid the chaos with last minute details before opening the show. With camera in hand Ashley snapped photos as she went about the theater. And once in our seats, we relaxed for a day of horror films. *Alligator* played first. This film was new to me and the more serious it portrayed itself, the more fun and humorous it became: A giant alligator living in the sewers, running amok through the city, bursting up through sidewalks and chomping on police officers.

Next up after the break was Dario Argento's *The Bird with the Crystal Plumage*. This dark thriller follows a witness to a murder attempt who becomes immersed with finding the killer in a moody atmosphere only the Italian master could pull off.

After a short break perhaps the most notorious film of the fest came on, *Cannibal Holocaust*. Having viewed this film almost a decade ago I had forgotten just how extreme it truly is and after Ashley got a few shots



with the strangely funny at times acting, shots and dialogue to go along with the final film of the night, one that doesn't take itself too seriously as well...

*The Return of the Living Dead*! This was the highlight of my own day, as I'm sure it was for many of the other fans. In my opinion ROTLD is by far the top zombie film. Mixing punk rock, greasers, dark humor, great special effects and story makes for pure zombie excellence.



of the opening credits she went out the door, as did quite a few viewers after the death of the Caoti (wrongly referred to as the muskrat by many but close enough, right?).

*D r .*

*Butcher, MD* was next, also known as *Z o m b i e Holocaust*. A nice mixture of the cannibal theme in an exotic location

As the end credits rolled we said our goodbyes to Tad and Chris and staff and made it back to the hotel to soak our sore asses in the hot tub once again with some drinks. A solid day of classic horror films, Cherry Slurpees, creative booths, good people and rumbling bubbles.

If I could give a day to any fan, I'd give them a day at Hudson Horror Show to see what it's like among true horror fans at a festival run by true horror fans.

Now that I'm done with my "Day-in-the-life" segment, I'd like for you to meet and learn more about Hudson Horror Show and the organizers, Chris and Tad, in the following interview conducted with these horror aficionados.

**Dustin LaValley:** Horror for you both is deep-rooted. Where and how did this love for the genre come from?

**Chris Alo:** Growing up I had an uncle who got me into the Hammer and Universal films when I was very young, I learned to read to *Famous Monsters Magazine*.



This same uncle took me to the theater in 1979 to see *Alien*, and that was it. I switched to *Fangoria Magazine* and it's been monsters and gore ever since.

**Tad Leger:** For me it started with monster movies like *7th Voyage of Sinbad*, *Godzilla* flicks. Then one day I rented *Gates of Hell* by Lucio Fulci and it was like crack. The Italian horror films of Argento, Bava and Fulci gave me a thrill unlike anything I had ever seen and the soundtracks of *Goblin* created an atmosphere that in my opinion has never been equaled. I'm also a long-time fan of horror magazines like *Creepy*, *Eerie* and underground comics from the '70s.

**DL:** Can you tell us how Hudson Horror Show was formed?

**TL:** I'm the webmaster for the Grindhouse Releasing site and I saw how many theaters were booking films like *Cannibal Holocaust* and *Pieces*. I asked them about renting some prints and they said as long as we paid to ship them, we could have them free of charge. So I mentioned this to Chris, since he's about the only person I know who could actually pull this off. He had a friend George, who was the manager at Silver Cinemas in Poughkeepsie. So we meet with him and he was totally behind us and cleared everything with Landmark, who own the theater and we were on our way!

**DL:** How does Hudson Horror Show differ itself from other festivals?

**CA:** We only screen classic movies from vintage 35mm film prints. If we can't get a movie on film, we'll have to get a different movie. We won't screen any of our classic movies off DVD or Blu-Ray. It's pointless when everyone has big flat screen TVs and projectors at home, and it's dishonest. I once flew halfway around the country to a genre "film" festival, only to get there to find out that all movies being shown were off DVD projection.

**TL:** I think because Chris and I have been fans for so long, we try to offer people a chance to see films outside of the Jason and Freddy franchises. To be able to screen films like *Dr. Butcher MD*, *Zombie*, *Bird with the Crystal Plumage* and *Pieces* is just as big a thrill as seeing it for the first time. The people in the Hudson Valley area where we hold the fest have been so supportive of Hudson Horror Show. So it's very satisfying to see everyone having such a great time at the show. We've met so many cool horror fans and made some great new friends. We are also adding more vendors at each show now. So people can find cool collectibles from Grindhouse, hard to find/out of print titles, shirts, toys. Even get a photo of themselves battling against some crusty zombies!

**DL:** What can a fan expect when planning on attending the show?

**CA:** To have a good time! They can expect to see just a taste of modern, indie horror shorts along with a lot of



classic "drive in" style trailers in between each classic film we show. We do trivia contests, costume contests and have a lot of giveaways. There's also vendors at each show selling all sorts of horror merch like DVDs, t-shirts, books, posters, etc.

We also try and give a little back to the customer when we can. For this next show everyone that bought an advance ticket gets a free, limited edition Hudson Horror Vomit Bag filled with candy. But you'll have to provide the vomit.

**DL:** What's the rundown of the day of the festival for the organizers like?

**CA:** While everyone is finding their seats we run CDs of vintage drive in radio spots for movies from the '70s and '80s. The show starts at 1PM with a smattering of indie shorts and trailers, along with maybe a few other fun things, this is off DVD. I like to do this in case people are running late or stuck in traffic.

After an hour we switch to 35mm film and steam through five full length classics and as many trailers as we can squeeze in. In between each film we do trivia contests and giveaways, etc. We open the doors at noon, the show officially starts at 1PM and it's usually over by midnight or so.

**TL:** When people first get in, they have a chance to check out all the vendor tables and mingle for awhile.







# SHADOWMAIL

LETTERS - LETTERS - LETTERS - LETTERS - LETTERS - LETTERS

## HONOR OF HONORS

My compliments go to everyone that works so hard on *Shadowland Magazine*. Superb recognition to Mr. Pinkney for his outstanding artwork. To have three paintings in issue #4 was awesome to see. And he writes articles too? Wow – it's amazing. Everyone keep up the great job that you are doing for *Shadowland*. I can't wait to see what future issues bring.

Kristine Berry

## GRAYSKULL LIVES

Your *Masters of the Universe* articles in the previous issue were what I've been waiting for, for some time. It was nice to read about the current action figures (looks like I have to start collecting MOTU toys again) and the interview with Donald F. Glut was an informative surprise. I actually

have three of the four *Masters* mini-comics that he wrote. It's interesting to see just how much Mattel altered the MOTU universe when compared to those original stories. And *Shadowland's* retrospective on the live-action movie was one of the best I've read! After finishing the piece in your magazine I had the urge to pop the DVD in; watching Frank Langella as Skeletor, decked out in that makeup and outfit is something I never get tired of! There's no doubt he loved playing that role.

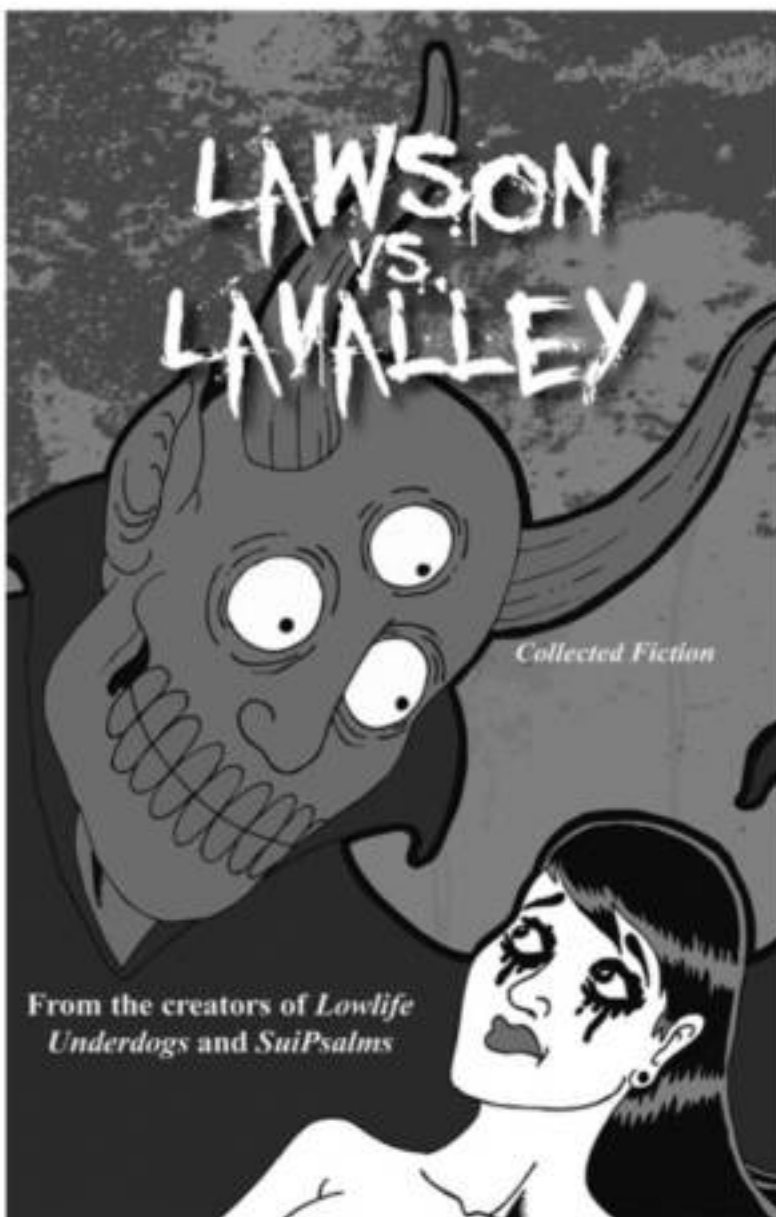
Take care,  
Mark Harriman

## NEW BLOOD

I just got my first issue of *Shadowland Magazine* for my birthday, along with a subscription. Arya Ponto's "The Hunger Games and the Bloody Legacy of Battle

Royale," was a terrific look at both brands. I hope you explore more of *Battle Royale*, the sequel, and the manga in a future issue. Also, down the line it would be great if you covered some classic horror, sci-fi and fantasy anime titles. *Akira* is an obvious example, but there's also *Astro Boy*, *Gatchaman*, *Robotech*, and obscurities like *Harmageddon*. It looks like *Shadowland* did an article on *The Guyver* (I just ordered the back issue and can't wait to read it!), a personal favorite of mine. Unfortunately, it feels like anime is reverting back to its former "underground" status, at least here in the United States, with so many anime magazines ceasing publication and distribution companies like ADV closing down. Anyway, would be sweet to see *Shadowland* cover some more anime titles in issues to come!

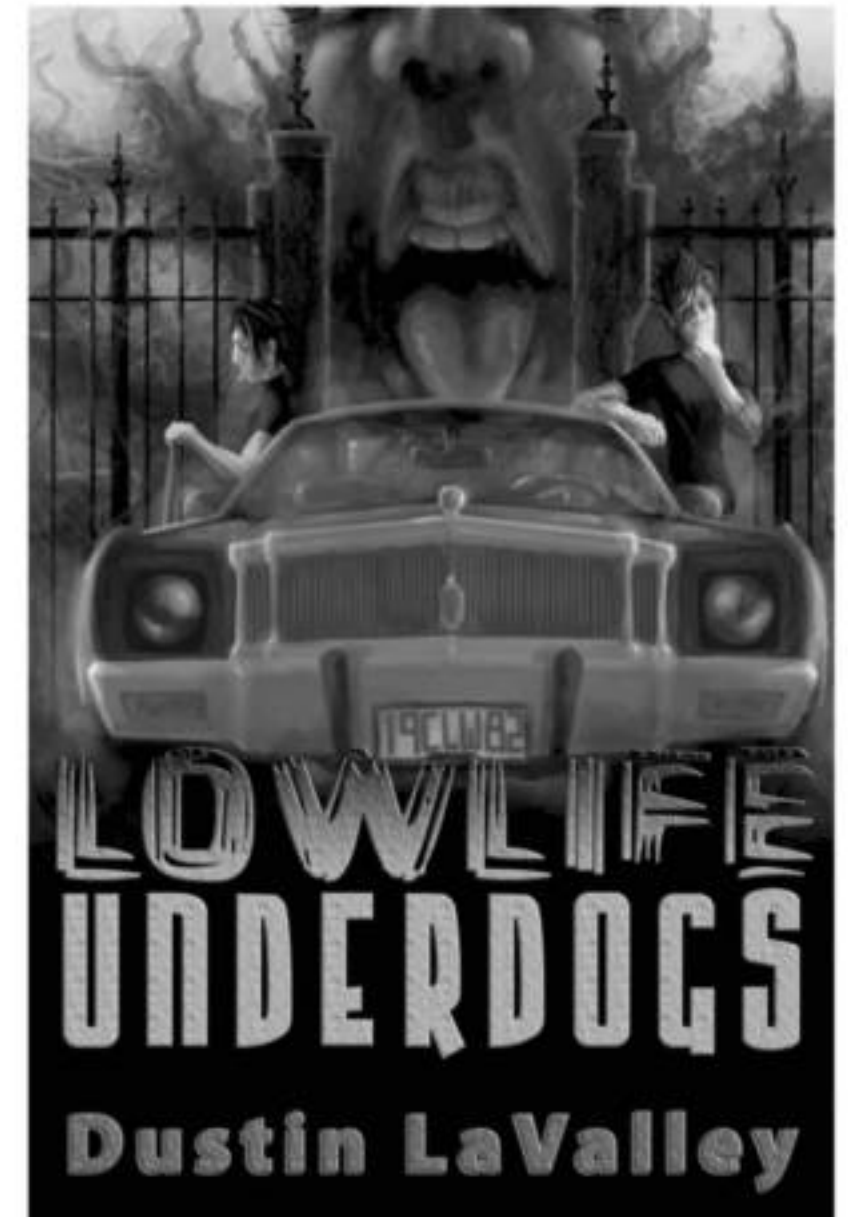
Sincerely,  
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"Once I started reading, I couldn't put it down...It's like if you took William Burroughs and Hubert Selby, painted them onyx-black, then put them into a time machine and shot them into 2009. It's exceptional, outre, and unique material."—Ed Lee



# SHO KOSUGI



# THE LAST NINJA



## CHAPTER I: Growing Up in Japan (1948-1968)

Born in Shiba, a suburb of Tokyo, Japan on June 17th, 1948, Shōichi Kosugi, better known to ninja movie fans all over the world as Sho Kosugi, first began his martial arts training at the age of 5. Sho was the youngest child and only son of a fisherman. His father Fusataro along with his mother and two older sisters urged him to learn some form of martial art because although tall for his age, he was rather weak, due to a hole in his lungs. To become stronger, Sho began studying Shindo Jinen Ryu Karate, a style which draws heavily from both Shotokan (from which it originated) and Shito Ryu Karate but also extensively utilizes Aikido, Jiu-Jitsu and Kendo principles and techniques, with master and originator of the style Yasuhiro Konishi, at a dojo about a block away from his home.

A year or so later, when Sho was 6, he attended acting school in Tokyo for about six months, but the hyperactive boy was thrown out by the teacher who told Sho he had no patience and that he'd never be an actor. Shortly thereafter, when Sho was 7 years old, he met Mr. Yamamoto, a mysterious neighbor. Uncle Yamamoto as Sho called him was a quiet 70 year old man who kept to himself and whom the other neighbors regarded as being strange. Against his family's wishes, Sho would visit the old hermit everyday after school and they would have long talks about Ninjutsu, the art of the ninja. For the next five years, the old man would teach the young Kosugi Ninjutsu techniques and weaponry in an informal manner. Then suddenly one day when Sho was 12 years old, he came home to find that Uncle Yamamoto had disappeared, never to be heard from again.

In the subsequent years, while continuing his Karate training, Sho studied Kendo and Judo while in Junior High School and then began his studies in Iaido and Kobudo while attending High School, where he also played baseball for a year. By the time Sho was 18, his martial arts studies had helped him to become the All-Japan Karate Champion. Shortly thereafter in 1968 at age 19, after a battle with depression and thoughts of suicide due to his failing college entrance exams in Japan, Sho made the decision to relocate to the United States to attend college in California.

## CHAPTER II: Early Life in America (1968-1980)

Intent on becoming an international trader, Sho arrived at the Los Angeles International Airport and boarded a bus he hoped would take him to his new home in "Little Tokyo". However, Sho's inability to read or speak English inadvertently led him to take the wrong bus. A few hours later, the bus dropped him off in a seedy part of L.A. littered with vagrants and gangs. As Sho made his way through the streets, three men suddenly jumped out at him, with one of them holding a knife. Although unable to understand what the thugs were saying, the blade transcended all language barriers. As the two other men grabbed Sho from behind, Sho



delivered a powerful kick to the armed man's chest sending him crashing to the ground. The other two assailants, seeing their friend moaning in pain on the bloody sidewalk, decided to flee. Shortly thereafter, as an ambulance brought the would-be robber to the hospital, Sho went to a Los Angeles Police Station where he spent the rest of the day. Fortunately, Sho's subsequent days in America would not be as traumatic.

After months of studying English, Sho began taking classes at Pasadena City College and then transferred to California State University, where he would eventually receive a Bachelors Degree in Economics. Working a variety of odd jobs to pay for his studies, Sho continued his martial arts training by studying with renowned Shito Ryu Karateka and Kobudo master Fumio Demura, and Gosoku-ryu Karate, Judo, Aikido, Kendo, and Iaido master Takayuki "Tak" Kubota. Sho also reunited with Shindo Jinen Ryu Karate, Kobudo, and Iaido master Kiyoshi Yamazaki, who had been his Senpai while he was studying with master Konishi in Japan. For several years, Sho also participated in Demura's popular martial arts demos at the Japanese village and Deer Park, an amusement park in Southern California. These demonstrations, which incorporated a wide variety of martial arts including Karate, Kobudo and Kendo, were famous for their use of theatrical lighting, music and costumes to show the audience the power and excitement of the martial arts. Noted fellow martial arts masters such as Kiyoshi Yamazaki and Dan Ivan also regularly participated in these popular events. Sometime during this period Sho also appeared as a contestant on the popular television program *Ted Mack*



and the *Original Amateur Hour* where he won the top prize. Sho competed in various martial arts tournaments all over the U.S., Canada and Mexico during this time, and by 1974 he had won an astonishing 663 trophies and cups, which included winning the L.A. Open in 1972, 1973 and 1974. Sho also taught the martial arts during this time and he became particularly close to a young Chinese woman named Shook, who he had originally met at English language school. After graduating from California State University, Sho and Shook were married. Sho taught Shook the martial arts for four years, until she began to raise their children: Kane who was born in 1974, Shane, born in 1976, and Ayesha, born in 1983.

During these early years in America, Sho tried his hand at acting and appeared as an extra in various movies over an eight year period, including *The Godfather Part II* (1974), where he played a passerby dressed in a large coat with a cap pulled down over his eyes. Sho also appeared in a couple of low budget martial arts films, one was a Taiwanese film reportedly released under the title *Six Killers* and the other was a South Korean film shot in Los Angeles called *American Bangmungaeg* (English Titles: *The Stranger From Korea*, *The Stranger*. Literal Translation: *American Visitor*). The latter was subsequently dubbed into English and a new ultra-cheesy opening scene featuring a man (supposedly Bruce Lee) bursting out of a grave

marked with Bruce Lee's name was tacked on and the film was re-titled *Bruce Lee Fights Back from the Grave*. The film, which has absolutely nothing to do with Bruce Lee, is not great by any stretch of the imagination, but it is interesting if you're a Sho Kosugi fan for a number of reasons. First off, not only does Sho play a martial arts fighter, but he basically plays a modern day samurai fighting not only hand-to-hand, but wields a samurai sword and a pair of sai during the fast paced and frenzied battle with the movie's star.

An interesting element in the movie is that Sho's real-life business card, which at the time read "Sho's Karate Dojo", is shown in a scene where the film's star picks it up and looks at it before making his way to said dojo where he engages in a fight against a number of students all wearing white Karate gis with "Sho's Karate Dojo" printed on the backs.

Another film on Sho's early resume is *The Bad News Bears Go to Japan* starring Tony Curtis, Jackie Earle Haley, Tomisaburo Wakayama, Antonio Inoki, and Hatsune Ishihara, released in the summer of 1978. Don't blink or you'll miss his appearance, his on-screen time is just a few seconds as he's merely one of a group of Karateka doing a Kata demonstration. Sometime during this period Sho also appeared on the children's program, *Romper Room*. While these small film roles and TV appearances did allow Sho to spread his wings and try new things, they did not do much to pay the bills, and so he continued to teach martial arts at his dojo in San Gabriel, California.

Sho was also involved in promoting and fostering cultural exchanges through the martial arts by organizing trips to the Asian countries where the styles originated. In June 1978, Sho headed a group called the Martial Arts Promotion Union which included martial artists from the three major styles of the martial arts, Karate, Kung Fu, and Tae Kwon Do, and organized a three week martial arts tour that began in Los Angeles and went to Tokyo, then Seoul, and finally Taipei. In Japan the tour members worked out at the famed Mt. Fuji Dojo, and competed in a "good will" tournament against some of that school's top competitors. In Korea, they worked out and competed against the best fighters in the country at the Tae Kwon Do Dojo in Seoul, and then engaged in some Kung Fu practice in Taipei before competing against Taiwanese fighters. The tour, open to highly motivated black belts and exceptionally gifted brown belts, was so successful that another tour was organized the following year.

During this time, Sho also continued participating in martial arts demonstrations at various events and organized tournaments such as the "Hollywood Open Karate Championships". In conjunction he hosted what was billed as the "Hollywood Martial Art Action Contest" where martial artists of all ages were called upon to stage the most entertaining act they could devise for a panel of judges which included various agents, actors, and martial arts celebrities. One of the participants who wowed the crowd was Sho's 5 year old son Kane, dressed in traditional samurai garb, and wielding a samurai sword in a self defense routine against four or five slightly older warriors.



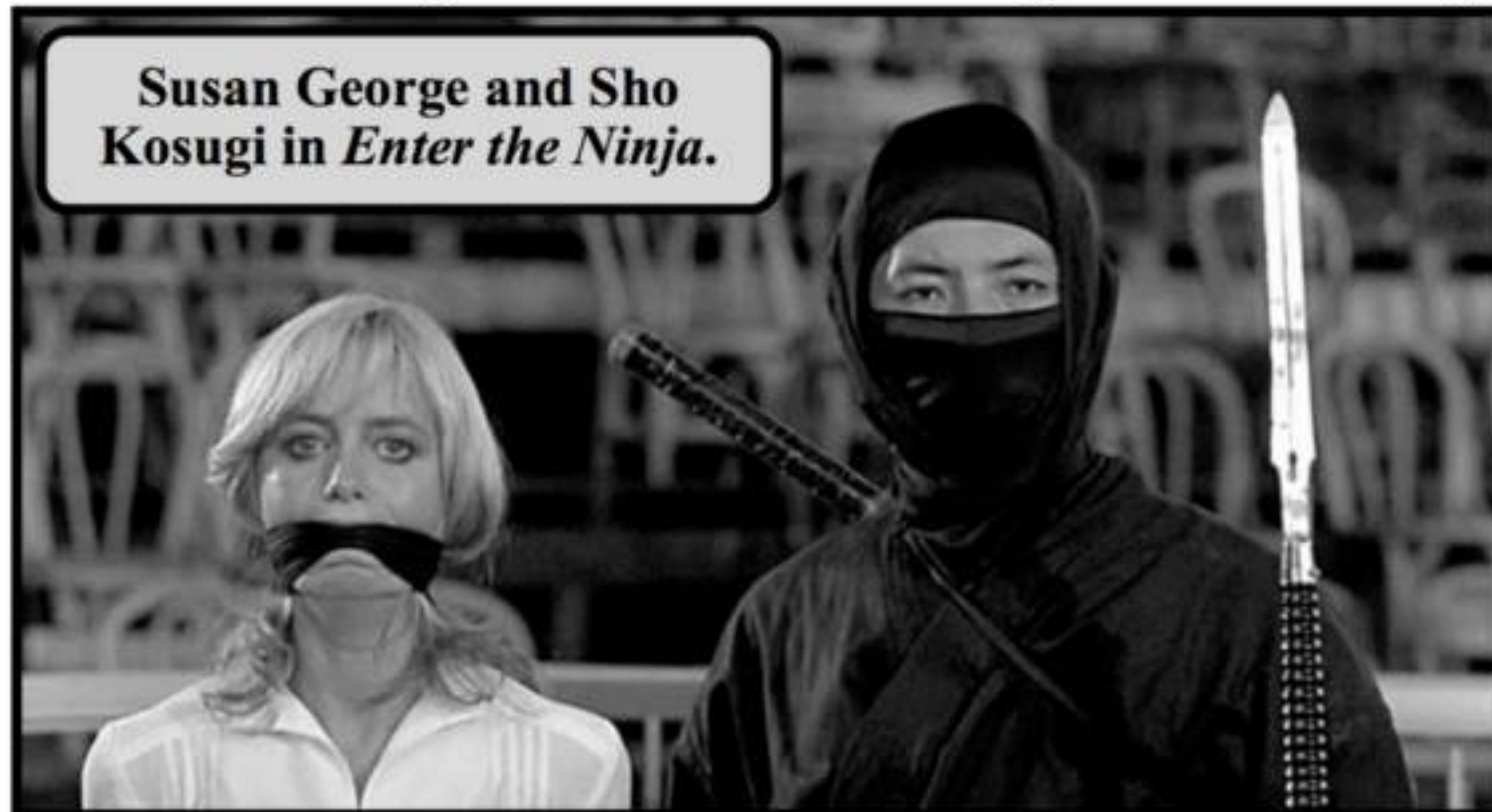


### CHAPTER III: The Ninja Years (1981-1987)

Sho would finally get his big movie break when famed Karate competitor Mike Stone successfully pitched a story he wrote called "Dance of Death" to Cannon Films. Stone assembled a group of martial artists to play ninja warriors and to work as stuntmen in the film and Sho was one of the people chosen. "Dance of Death", re-titled *Enter the Ninja*, was filmed on location in the Philippines from January 1981 to February 1981.

During the production, Mike Stone, who was to have been the film's lead, had some sort of falling out with the producer or director and was replaced with actor Franco Nero. Despite this falling out, Stone stayed on as the film's principal fight choreographer and double for Franco Nero's character. As filming progressed, director Menahem Golan and producers Judd Bernard and Yoram Globus noticed Sho's amazing martial arts skills and natural acting ability and kept adding things for him to do, until finally Sho was a full fledged co-star in the film. Also co-starring in the film were Susan George, Christopher George, Alex Courtney, and Dale Ishimoto. Interestingly enough, Susan George would follow-up her appearance in *Enter the Ninja* by co-starring in the supernatural samurai haunted house film *The House Where Evil Dwells* co-starring Edward Albert and Doug McClure.

Susan George and Sho Kosugi in *Enter the Ninja*.



Along with playing the ninja assassin Hasegawa, Sho also doubled for many of the maroon ninja warriors in the film's opening alongside fellow martial artists Alan Amiel and Doug Ivan, and also doubled for the white ninja (Franco Nero's character) in some scenes.

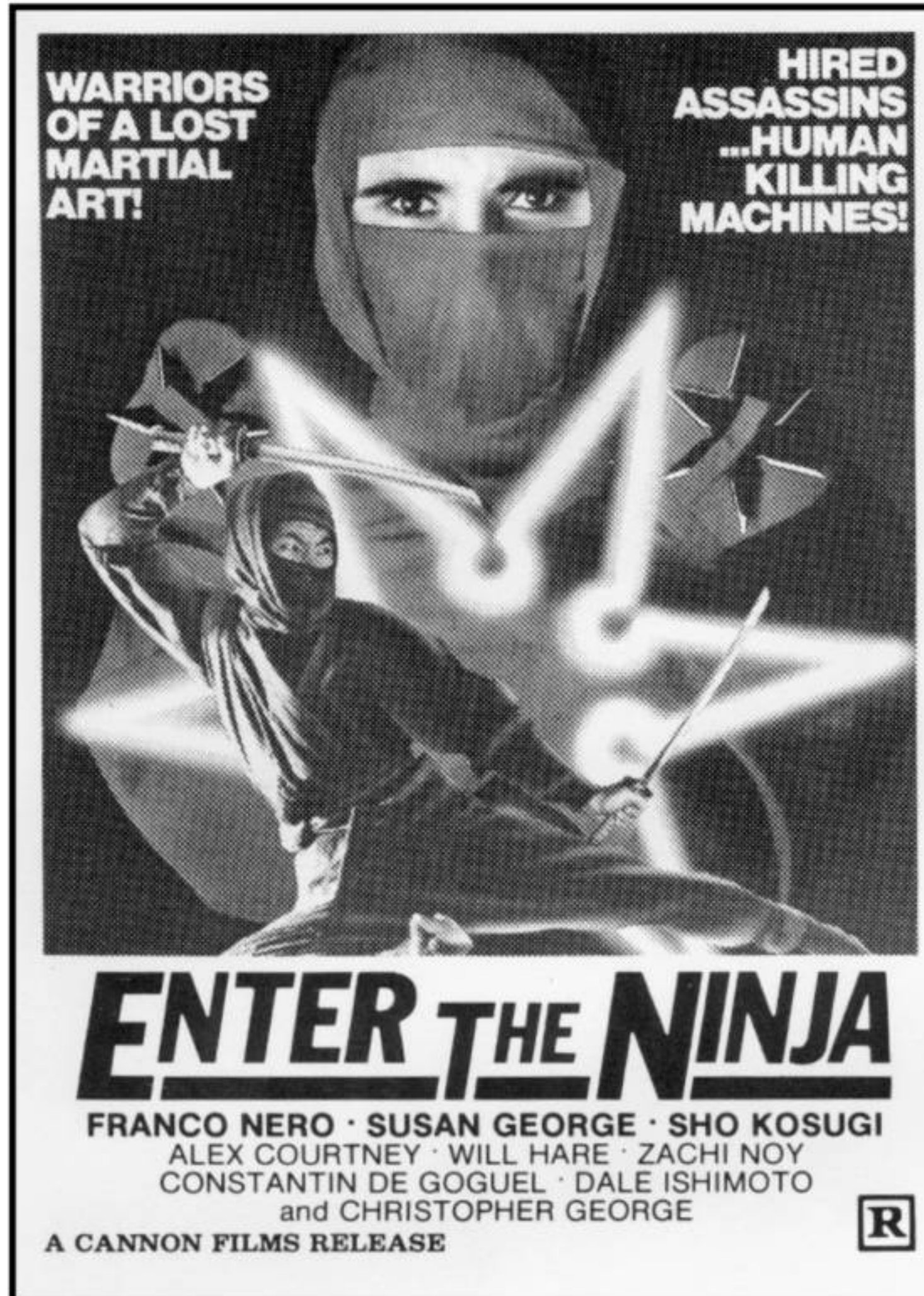
When *Enter the Ninja* was released by MGM/UA in the fall of 1981, it sparked a martial arts craze not seen since the emergence of Bruce Lee nearly a decade earlier. Sho's scene stealing performance, which included an exciting final duel between Sho's character and

the white ninja (doubled by Mike Stone), immediately earned Sho a loyal fan following, eagerly awaiting his next project. As the saying goes, "a star was born", and so was the "ninja craze" of the 1980s.

A short time later, the Cannon Group's second ninja film *Revenge of the Ninja* went into production. Filmed on location in Salt Lake City, Utah from September 1982 to November 1982, *Revenge of the Ninja* put Sho firmly in the lead role of a reluctant Iga ninja master escaping the brutal killing of his family by a group of Koga ninja in his native Japan. Moving to the U.S., Sho's character eventually realizes that a ninja can't escape his destiny. Released by MGM/UA in the Summer of 1983, *Revenge of the Ninja* was a huge success and established Sho as one of the world's most popular

action stars. The film also introduced movie audience's to Sho's real-life sons. His eldest son Kane, who was only 8 years old at the time, played Sho's son in the film and his performance is quite impressive with Kane displaying some truly incredible fighting. Sho's youngest son Shane also appears briefly in the film's opening as the young boy killed by the shuriken. Rounding out the solid cast for the film were Keith Vitali, Virgil Frye, Arthur Roberts, Mario Gallo, Grace Oshita, and Ashley Ferrare.

Along with playing the reluctant ninja master Cho Osaki, Sho also doubled for the evil masked ninja in many sequences. *Revenge of the Ninja*, written by James R. Silke and directed by Sam Firstenberg, is considered by many to be the best modern-day ninja movie ever made. This is no doubt due in large part to the non-stop action







scenes, featuring Sho at the top of his game.

Adding to the smoothness of the fight scenes, which were choreographed by Sho, was the use of some of Sho's real-life students, including black belts Alan Amiel, who played the red sash ninja leader, and Eddie Tse, doubling for the masked ninja (Arthur Roberts' role) in the film's climactic final duel. Also delivering in the martial arts department was Karate champion Keith Vitali playing police Karate instructor and Cho's friend, Dave Hatcher.

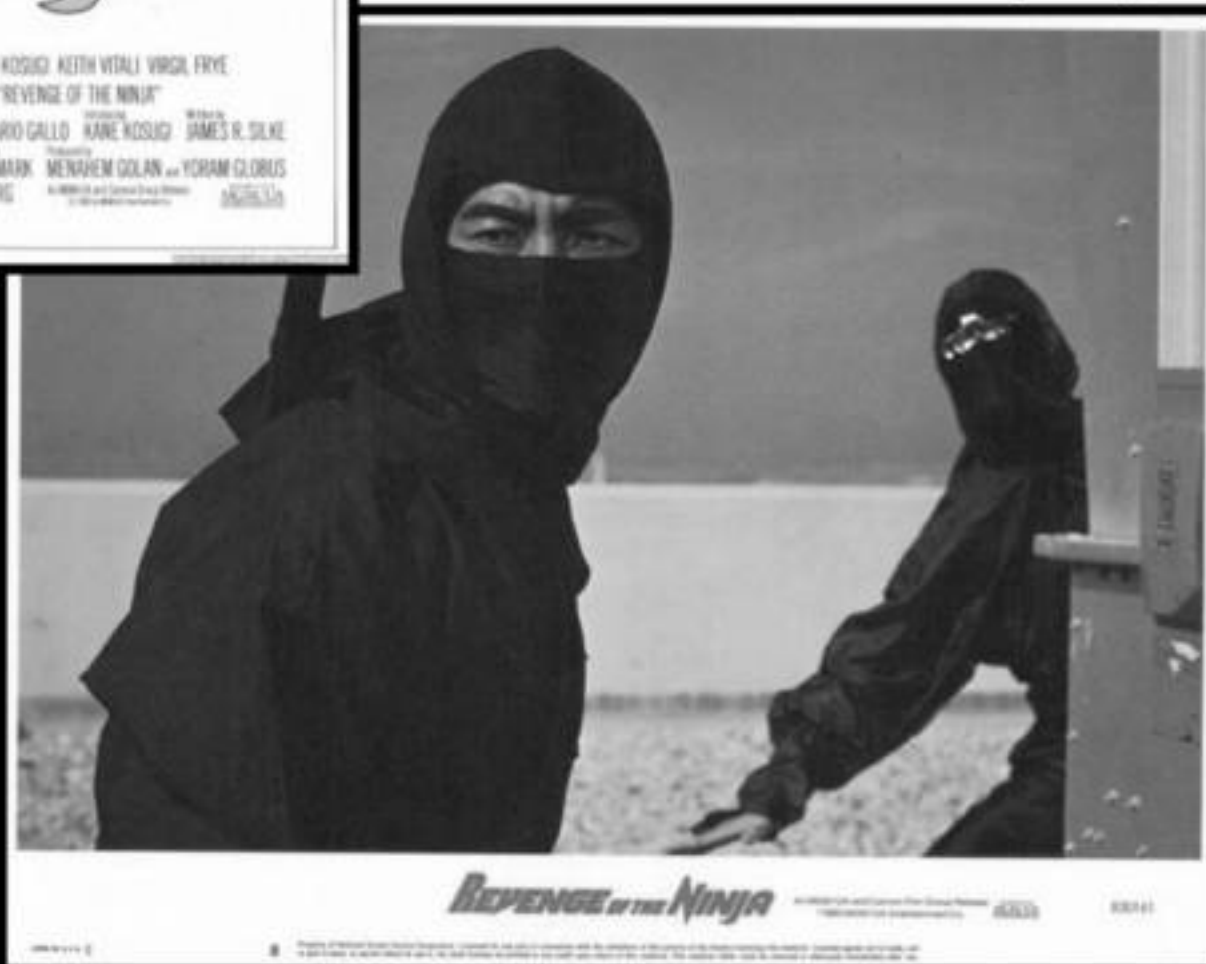
*Revenge of the Ninja* was truly a ground-breaking film, not only in terms of cementing the ninja movie as a viable and popular genre with fans worldwide, but more importantly from a historical standpoint because it was very likely the first Hollywood film in which an Asian-born performer was given the lone lead credit. Even the legendary Bruce Lee shared top billing with his American counterpart John Saxon in his first (and sadly last) Hollywood-starring vehicle *Enter the Dragon*. For the Cannon Group to give Sho the starring credit in just his second Hollywood film is quite impressive and bold on their part, especially considering the fact that the next big Asian martial arts movie stars to make it in Hollywood, Jackie Chan and Jet Li, wouldn't do so until more than a decade later.

Riding the wave of success from their first two ninja films, the Cannon Group began production on the third and final installment in their 'Ninja Trilogy'. Once again, Sho would be the star and, just like in *Revenge of the Ninja*, director Sam Firstenberg would be working from a script written by James R. Silke. Filmed on location in Phoenix, Arizona from October 1983 to December 1983, *Ninja III: The Domination* co-starring Lucinda Dickey, Jordan Bennett, David Chung, Dale Ishimoto, and James Hong, followed the basic formula established in *Enter the Ninja* and *Revenge of the Ninja* while adding an element of the supernatural to the mix.

In the film, Sho's character Yamada, a mysterious ninja who wears a tsuba (sword guard) over his left eye (an homage to the legendary 17th century samurai/ninja Jubei Yagyu) comes to the U.S. from

Japan to do battle with an old enemy. In death, Yamada's enemy possesses the body of a young woman (played by Lucinda Dickey) forcing her to take revenge on the policemen responsible for his death. As in his previous ninja epics, Sho also did double duty on the film, acting as star and fight choreographer and once again bringing in Alan Amiel to double for the evil ninja.

Released by MGM/UA in the Fall of 1984, *Ninja III: The Domination* was another box office smash for Sho, establishing him as the most visible and sought after ninja actor in the world. The film also marked an end to the mutually profitable partnership



between Sho and the Cannon Group. Sho would go on to make films for other companies, while the Cannon Group would continue making ninja movies *without* Sho, namely the *American Ninja* series, the first two of which would be directed by Sam Firstenberg and see the re-

turn of Mike Stone as fight choreographer. And in what was likely an attempt to fill the void left by the

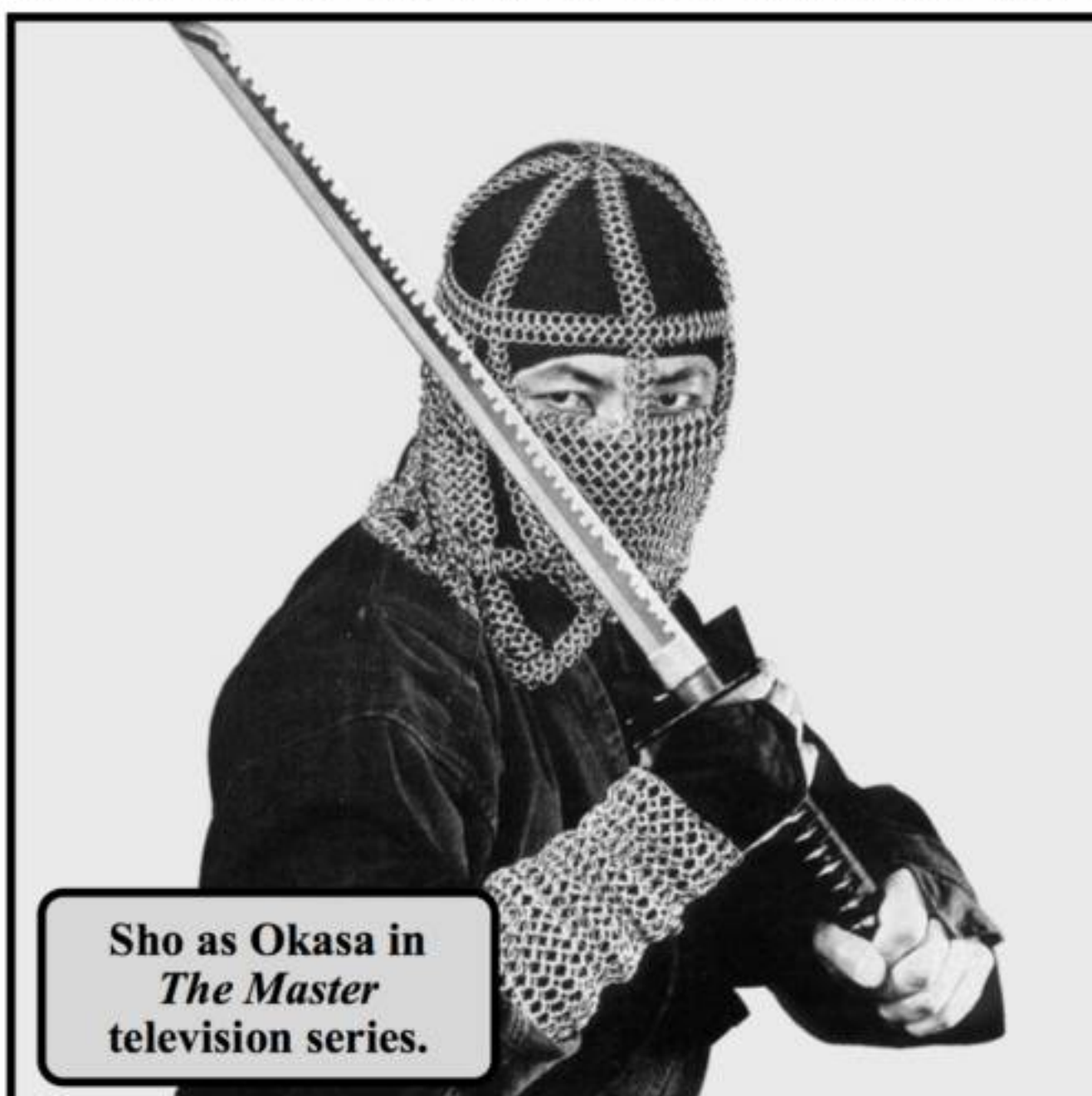




departure of their ninja superstar Sho, Cannon hired martial arts master Tadashi Yamashita, who, much like he did in the third modern-day ninja movie *The Octagon* starring Chuck Norris, played the enemy ninja in the first film, while Mike Stone filled that role in the sequel. And John Fujioka, another alum from *The Octagon* and certainly no stranger to the ninja genre having played a ninja in an episode of the 1970s TV series *Baretta* entitled "The Ninja", played the American Ninja's adoptive father and ninja teacher.

Much in demand, Sho's next project was the American Television series *The Master* co-starring Lee Van Cleef as ninja master John Peter McAllister and Timothy Van Patten as his sidekick Max who together travel the U.S. in search of the master's long-lost daughter, while Sho as the ninja assassin Okasa pursues them and tries to end his former master's life. Shot on location in Los Angeles, California from December 1983 to May 1984, forcing Sho to fly back and forth from Phoenix, Arizona where he was completing *Ninja III: The Domination*, the TV series, a co-production between Michael Sloan Productions and Viacom Productions, aired on NBC from January 20th, 1984 to August 31st, 1984. Despite Sho's involvement as co-star, fight choreographer, ninja technical advisor and double for Lee Van Cleef's character, the show did not return after its initial 13 episode run. No doubt contributing to the series' cancellation was its Friday night timeslot up against the huge hit *Dallas*. Also working against it was the show's writing, which for the most part was not very good. When asked about this in an interview, Sho stated that he'd hoped the series and storylines would be more serious in tone, more along the lines of the classic *Kung Fu* TV series starring David Carradine, but it was not to be.

Interestingly enough a year earlier ABC had commissioned a pilot for a TV series called *The Last Ninja* written by Ed Spielman, who had written the pilot for the original *Kung Fu* series, which was very much in that spirit and tone. Sadly, the excellent two-hour pilot



starring Michael Beck, Nancy Kwan, Mako, and featuring *Enter the Ninja* alumni's Mike Stone and Doug Ivan, appearing as members of the terrorist group and serving as martial arts consultant and *Last Ninja* double respectively, did not get picked up for a series like *The Master* did. Ironically enough a third ninja TV series called *Raven*, this time from rival American network CBS, would air in 1992 and ran two short seasons for a total of 20 episodes (7 in season 1 and 13 in season 2). Starring Jeffrey Meek as ninja Jonathan Raven and Lee Majors as his sidekick Herman "Ski" Jablonski, the series borrowed more than a little from *The Master* by featuring a ninja who left his sect (the Black Dragons) and is now searching for his long-lost child (a son this time around), while being pursued by members of the Black Dragons who are constantly trying to kill him. And just like *The Master's* John Peter McAllister and Max, *Raven's* Jonathan Raven and Ski were a mismatched duo featuring an older man and a younger man who help out people in trouble. The series didn't really have a character equivalent to Okasa, but noted martial artists James Lew, Jeff Imada (who also appeared on *The Master*), Philip Tan, and character actor John Fujioka did portray Black Dragons in a few episodes.

Another element that misfired for *The Master* was Lee Van Cleef. Although a fine actor probably best known for his many Spaghetti Westerns and no stranger to the ninja genre having appeared in the aforementioned movie *The Octagon*, Van Cleef was nevertheless suffering from a bad back and bad knees and thus was horribly miscast in the role of the spry ninja master. Nevertheless, the show did have some fantastic fight sequences. Sho appeared in all 13 episodes, doubling for Lee Van Cleef's character. Sho's character Okasa was also featured prominently in five of the series' best episodes. Yet another high point was the guest appearance of Sho's son Kane in the final episode. The series featured guest appearances from a lot of beautiful young actresses, many of whom would go on to successful acting careers in movies and television, including Demi Moore (*Ghost*, *A Few Good Men*), Shanna Reed (*Major Dad*), Crystal Bernard (*Wings*), Jennifer Runyon (*Charles in Charge*), Terri Treas (*Alien Nation*), Tara Buckman (*The Misadventures of Sheriff Lobo*), Janine Turner (*Northern Exposure*), Rebecca Holden (*Knight Rider*), Mary Stewart Masterson (*Fried Green Tomatoes*), and Ashley Ferrare (Cathy in *Revenge of the Ninja*). Other noteworthy guest stars included Doug McClure from the aforementioned *The House Where Evil Dwells*, George Lazenby in a role that was clearly meant to mirror James Bond, which he had played in *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*, Brian Tochi, yet another alum from *The Octagon* (having played the younger version of Tadashi Yamashita's character), and Soon-Teck Oh, who along with actress Kelly Harmon (sister of actor Mark Harmon), played one the few other ninja characters to appear on the show. *The Master* marked the first time that Sho's real voice was heard on screen, having been dubbed by voice actors with similar tones in his Cannon films because the producers felt his accent was too thick. A year or so after it went off the air, *The Master* found new life and gained new fans when TWE (Trans World Entertainment) released it on Home



Video as *The Master Ninja*.

For his next project, Sho returned to the Philippines where he shot the film *9 Deaths of the Ninja* from May 1984 to June 1984. *9 Deaths of the Ninja*, filmed ironically enough under the working title "American Ninja", co-starred Brent Huff and Emilia Lesniak and was Sho's first ninja film not produced by the Cannon Group and the end result was quite disappointing. After filming was completed and Sho had returned to the U.S., the film was badly edited together and his voice was poorly dubbed into a ridiculously deep English/American sounding voice. The film, produced by Amritraj Productions and released through Crown International Pictures, also suffered from some truly horrible acting on the part of the film's villains, making the film laughable at times. On the bright side, the film did offer some cool fight scenes choreographed and performed by Sho and his students. Sho's two sons, Kane and Shane, also appear in the film. Another highlight

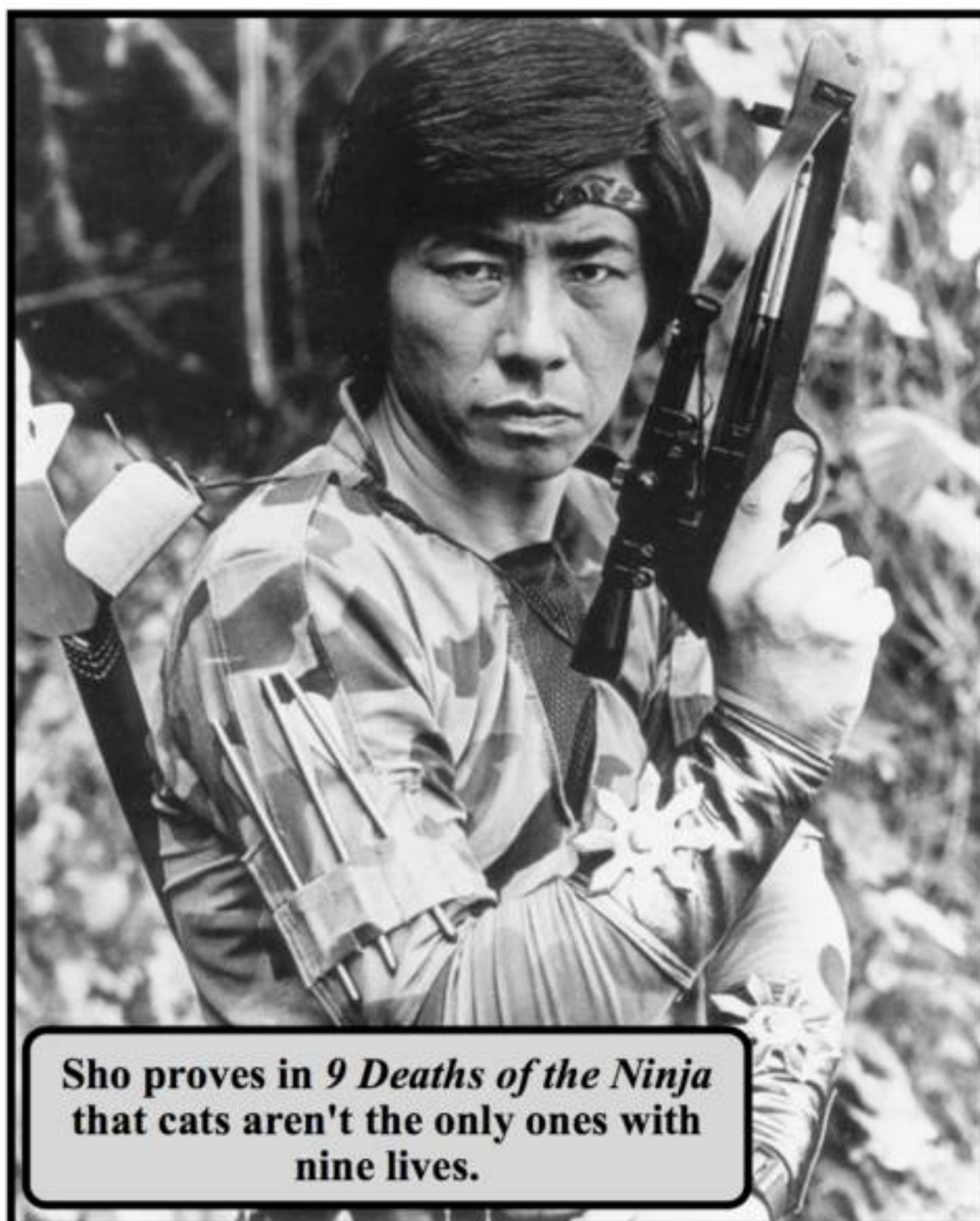


**Sons of the Ninja:**  
Shane (left) and Kane  
(right) join their father  
in *9 Deaths of the Ninja*.

was the flashback sequence showing how Sho's character had left his ninja group. It's worth noting that the actor playing Sho's master in the flashback, Philippines-based Japanese actor Ken Watanabe (not to be confused with the famous actor from Japan who appeared in the American films *The Last Samurai* opposite Tom Cruise and *Batman Begins* opposite Christian Bale) also appeared in and wrote some other ninja films produced in the Philippines including *Ninja's Force*, *Ninja Warriors*, and *Double Edge*.

It's interesting to note that *9 Deaths of the Ninja's* writer/director Emmett Alston had previously worked with Sho on *Enter the Ninja* where he'd been the Second Unit Director, and would go on to direct a few more ninja movies without Sho. The first one was called *Force of the Ninja* and it starred another alumni from *Enter the Ninja*, Doug Ivan (aka Douglas Yamanaka), who, as Sho had done, played a number of maroon-colored ninja warriors during that film's opening sequence. He also played Hasegawa's victim in the black-and-white "snuff film" sequence in *Enter the Ninja*. Along with starring in *Force of the Ninja*, Doug Ivan, whose mother was Japanese, co-wrote the screenplay with his father, American martial artist Dan Ivan.

As far as *9 Deaths of the Ninja* is concerned, the end result left Sho with a bad taste in his mouth and he vowed to become more involved in the pre-production, casting, and editing of his next films.



**Sho proves in *9 Deaths of the Ninja*  
that cats aren't the only ones with  
nine lives.**

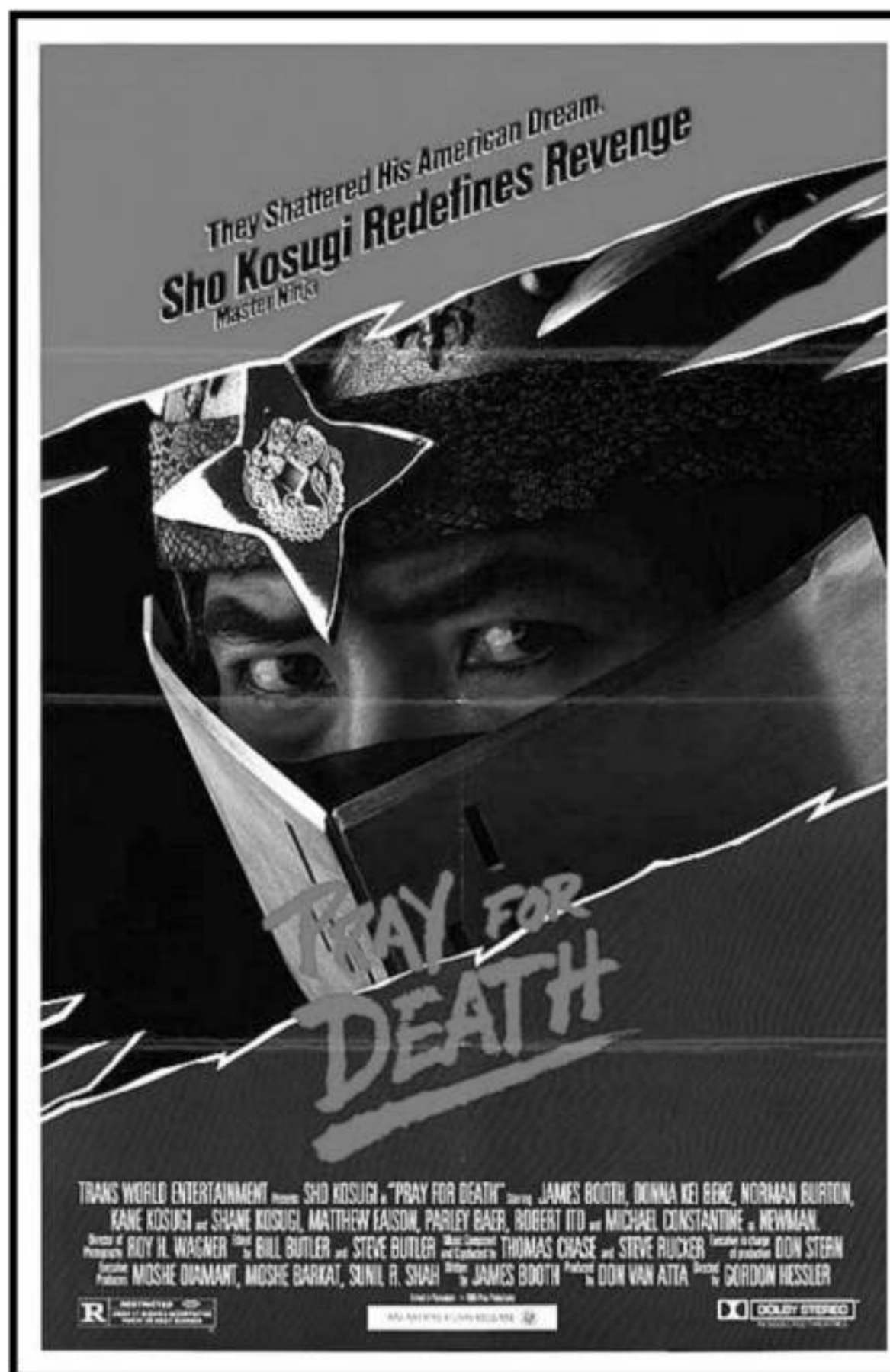
Sho next appeared in a wonderful coming of age drama initially called "Hanauma Bay", later to be known as "Made in Hawaii", and finally released years later as *Aloha Summer*. Filmed on location in beautiful Honolulu, Hawaii, with Sho filming his part in July 1984, the sentimental drama set in the summer of 1959 revolves around a group of teenagers of differing ethnicities and economic backgrounds coming together, becoming friends and growing up. Sho plays the part of Yukinaga Konishi, a traditional and strict Japanese father teaching the art of Kendo to his son Kenzo (played by Yuji Okumoto). The role called for Sho to appear much older than his 36 years and to speak for the most part in his native Japanese. Although a supporting role, the film offered Sho the opportunity to play his first non-ninja role and to shine as an actor, and he delivers one his most powerful performances ever.

While on the set, Sho met and worked with Japanese-Canadian actor Robert Ito (best known for his role on the TV series *Quincy, M.E.*) and asked him to play his father in his upcoming ninja film *Pray for Death*. Robert Ito had played one of the earliest ninja roles seen in an American production, having appeared as a ninja in an episode of the classic 1970s *Kung Fu* TV series entitled "The Assassin". Ito's series *Quincy M.E.* also featured an excellent ninja episode entitled "Touch of Death" with Mako as a ninja and Tadashi Yamashita doubling one of the actors in a fight sequence that opens the episode. The cast of *Aloha Summer* also included Chris Makepeace, Don Michael Paul, Andy Bumatai (who would later have a recurring role on the *Raven* TV series), Warren Fabro, Blaine Kia, Scott Nakagawa, Ric Mancini, Lorie Griffin, Teri Ann Linn, Marina Ferrier, and marked the screen debut of actress Tia Carrere. For whatever reason, although filmed in 1984, the film was not



released until 1988 on Warner Bros. Home Video.

A few months after completing *Aloha Summer*, Sho began work on his next film, *Pray for Death*. Filmed on location in Houston, Texas and Los Angeles, California from October 1984 to December 1984, *Pray for Death* marked Sho's return to a more serious type of ninja film. Similar in theme to *Revenge of the Ninja*, the film focuses on a reluctant master ninja named Akira Saito who moves his wife and two sons to the U.S. from Japan hoping to achieve the American Dream but finding a nightmare instead. Kane and Shane once again share the screen with their father, playing appropriately enough, his two sons. Donna Kei Benz, who plays the boys' mother and Sho's wife in the film, had previously appeared as the daughter of legendary Japanese actor Toshiro Mifune in John Frankenheimer's excellent modern-day samurai movie *The Challenge* starring Scott Glenn. She also appeared on a Yakuza themed episode of *Quincy M.E.* entitled "Sword of Honor, Blade of Death" along with Soon-Teck Oh, "ninja movie" regulars Mako and John Fujioka, and another future *Pray for Death* actor, Robert Ito. Also appearing in the film were James Booth, Norman Burton, Matthew Faison, Parley Baer, and Michael Constantine. James Booth, playing the film's villainous Limehouse, also wrote the screenplay and would go on to do the same for *American Ninja 2* and then appear as another villain in *American Ninja 4*.



Blessed with a compelling story, solid direction from director Gordon Hessler, great production values, and Sho's involvement not only as star and fight choreographer but also as consultant in the editing process, *Pray for Death* was another huge box office smash for Sho, even garnering positive reviews from the mainstream press. The film has the unique distinction of being the first foreign-made "ninja movie" to be released theatrically in Sho's native Japan. To coincide with the film's release in 1985, Sho attended the Cannes Film Festival in France to promote the film and was delighted to discover how popular his movies were in Europe. One day, while on the yacht provided to him by Trans World Entertainment, the film company responsible for *Pray for Death*, Sho received a visit from film legend Clint Eastwood. Sho and Clint

spent the afternoon together discussing films and the martial arts.

With Sho's popularity soaring worldwide, more and more fans were joining the official *Sho Kosugi Ninja Fan Club* during this time. Members who joined received glossy 8x10 photos of Sho from his many movie and TV projects, a membership patch, a regular fan club newsletter, and other goodies. Members also received discounts on the wide variety of items being sold by Sho Kosugi Ninja Enterprises Inc. This included posters, VHS copies of Sho's movies, magazines featuring Sho, and a large number of martial arts





weapons (some specially designed by Sho himself), training equipment, and uniforms, etc... Two of the most notable and prized items were the official Sho Kosugi Ninja-To, a sword specially-designed by Sho, and the Sho Kosugi Ninja Uniform, both of which were featured and used by Sho in a number of his projects.



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different segments for TWE for use in their video collection *Ninja Theater Hosted by Sho Kosugi*. As the title suggests, these short segments feature Sho "hosting" a film presentation by introducing a weapon and then a short fight scene involving Sho using this weapon is shown. Among the known segments done are: *katana*, *shikomizue*, *bo*, *yari*, *kama*, *manriki-gusari*, *tekagi*, *shobo*, *ninja fan*, *nunchaku*, *tonfa*, *jitte*, and *self defense*. More often than not these short introduction segments were the best thing on the tape, as most of the films in the *Ninja Theater* collection were cheaply produced Hong Kong Chop Socky films. It should be noted that Sho had nothing to do with these films and DID NOT appear in any of them. It should also be noted that the "ninja craze" begun in 1981 and had already reached its peak by this point. Many quickly and poorly produced copy-cat ninja films had been made all over the world, and this phenomenon began to saturate the market and thus the ninja craze was beginning to

fade.

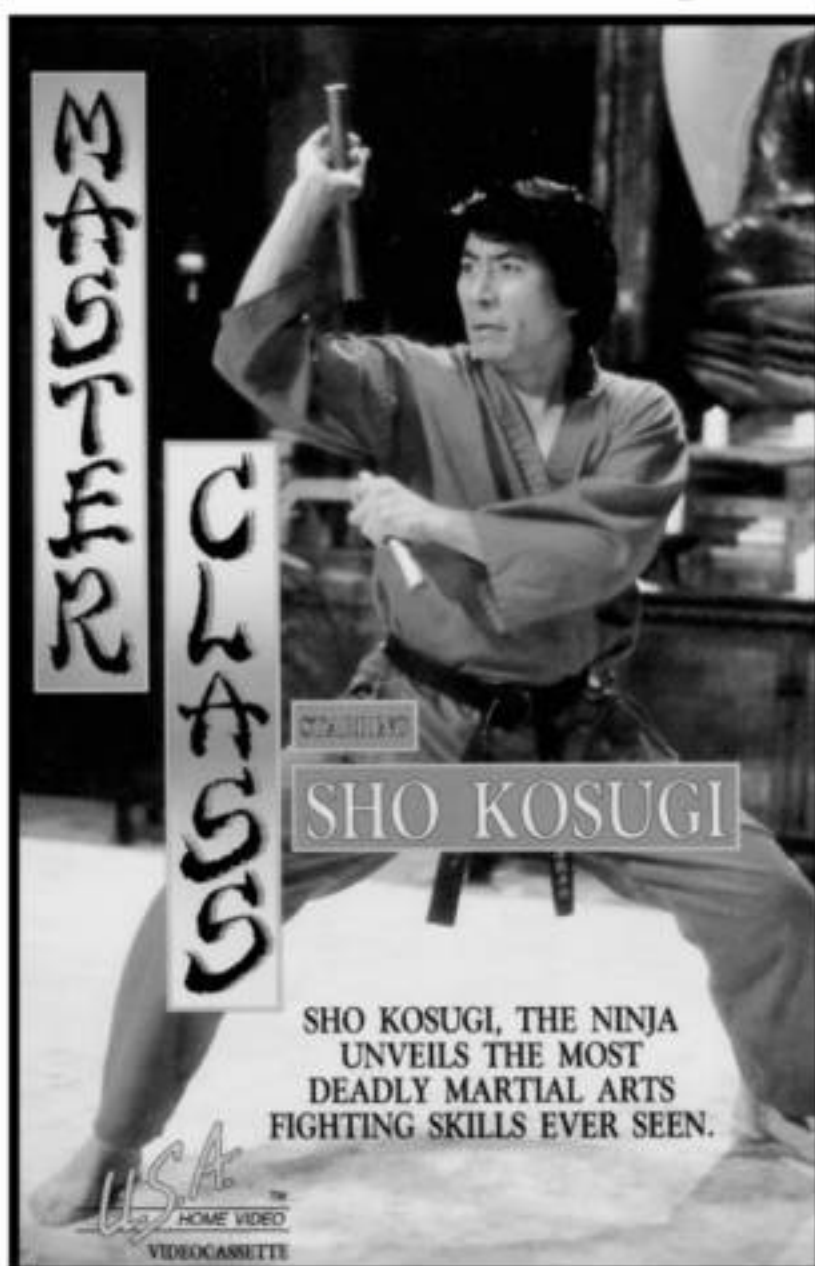
Sho next turned his attention to shooting an instructional home video called *Master Class*. Produced by Sho's frequent collaborator Alan Amiel in conjunction with Trans World Entertainment, the 60-minute video directed by Danielle Kail was hosted by Sho and featured him and his son Kane demonstrating a multitude of self-defense techniques involving both unarmed and armed attackers. In between these self-defense lessons were scenes from Sho's film *Pray for Death*. Sho and Kane also demonstrate some basic sword and nunchaku techniques. Around this time, Sho also shot at least 13

fade.

In the summer of 1985 Sho was offered his own ninja series. Weighing the pros and cons of doing a weekly television show and remembering how little time he was allotted to choreograph the fight scenes on *The Master TV Series*, he decided to pass and focus on his film career instead.

Following up the success of *Pray for Death*, Sho's next ninja movie *Rage of Honor*, went into production in November 1985 and filming was completed in April 1986. Once again produced by Trans World Entertainment and shot on location in Phoenix,

Arizona and in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the Gordon Hessler directed film had Sho playing a DEA Agent out to settle a score with the drug dealers who killed his partner. Appearing alongside Sho were Lewis Van Bergen, Robin Evans, Gerry Gibson, and Chip Lucia. Sho's character Shiro Tanaka uses a wide variety of traditional and modernized ninja gadgets and weapons in his job. Wearing a tuxedo by day and black clothing by night, Sho's James Bond-like character can best be described as a "Ninja 007" or as one magazine writer called him, "00-Sho." Appropriately enough, the first modern-day ninja movie was the 1967 James Bond adventure *You Only Live Twice* which featured legendary Japanese actor Tetsuro Tamba as Tiger Tanaka, leader of Japan's Secret Service which includes an army of ninja warriors. Who knows, perhaps Shiro Tanaka is Tiger Tanaka's son...?



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In any event, as with Sho's previous films, the action quota in *Rage of Honor* is very high with Sho choreographing the fight scenes, including great ones against ninja warriors dressed in camouflage costumes in the jungle, and against two black ninja assassins played by Argentine-based Japanese martial artists Masafumi Sakanashi and Kiyatsu Shimoyama, in a prison. Sho also performed most of his own stunts. In one scene, Sho was supposed to jump over a pit twelve feet by eight feet by twenty feet deep. As he reached the other side, the special effects technician was supposed to create an explosion. However, unable to see, the special effects man set off the explosion prematurely, catching Sho in the air. Sho received second degree burns on his left leg and was taken to the emergency room. Once he recovered, he returned to finish the film which was released in February 1987.

*Rage of Honor* would not only mark the end of a string of ninja movies for Sho, but also proved to be the final project that Sho's frequent collaborator Alan Amiel would be involved in. Amiel had appeared in all six of Sho's ninja movies starting with *Enter the Ninja*, as well as *The Master* TV series, and the *Master Class* and *Ninja Theater* videos. He had also served as Assistant Fight/Martial Arts Choreographer, Stunt Coordinator, or Action Coordinator on a number of those projects. Following the filming of *Rage of Honor*, Trans World Entertainment produced another martial arts movie filmed in Buenos Aires called *Catch the Heat*, with Alan Amiel serving as Martial Arts & Stunt Coordinator and Production Supervisor. Interestingly enough, the film starred Tianna Alexander, a former student of Bruce Lee, who had previously appeared as a female ninja alongside her ninja father played by Mako in 1975's *The Killer Elite*, the



second modern-day ninja movie. *Rage of Honor's* Masafumi Sakanashi also appears in *Catch the Heat* as Tianna's Kendo Master.

In October 1986, Sho filmed his first American television commercial for the then new Honda Hurricane Motorcycle. This clever promo had Sho dressed in full ninja costume and holding a katana (sword) inside a traditional Japanese house as a hurricane rages outside. The voice-over saying "The ninja...his strength and swiftness have become legend.... but even the ninja knows all things must hide from the hurricane. Hurricane Honda...it will come in the spring of the new year." The suggestion of course being that the Kawasaki Ninja and Suzuki Katana motorcycles were no match for the Honda Hurricane motorcycle.

In the early part of 1987, Sho joined a group called NAD (Ninjas Against Drugs) headed up by Michael DePasquale Jr. and the staff at *Ninja The Deadly Warrior* magazine. This organization was dedicated to helping young people learn the facts about drugs and most importantly learn how to say NO to drugs.

#### CHAPTER IV: A TIME OF EXPANSION (1987-1997)

Sho's next film, *Black Eagle*, filmed on location in Malta from June 1987 to August 1987, marked a departure for Sho. No longer playing a ninja, Sho's role of CIA agent Ken Tani did call for him to use some martial arts, but nowhere near as much as in his previous films. This was particularly surprising considering the fact that the film co-stars Jean-Claude Van Damme as a Russian agent and Sho's nemesis. The pairing of Sho and Van Damme promised to be an explosive combination, but the few fight scenes they're involved in are way too short for most martial arts enthusiasts. Nevertheless, the contrast in Sho and Van Damme's East-West styles of fighting is interesting to watch. Also co-starring in the film were Doran Clark, Bruce French, Vladimir Skomarovsky, and Kane and Shane Kosugi, playing, you guessed it, Sho's sons. The film was directed by Eric



Karson, who had previously directed *The Octagon*, and produced by Shimon Arama and Executive Producer Sunil R. Shah for Imperial Entertainment Corporation. Arama and Shah's previous company had been TWE (Trans World Entertainment), so this was a new beginning for them as well. Despite the minimal amount of martial arts, the



film was quite successful, especially in Europe and Canada.

After a short break from his hectic schedule, Sho returned to the silver screen in a special appearance cameo role in a modern-day adaptation/remake of a Japanese film called *Zatoichi Chikemuri Kaido* (aka *Zatoichi Challenged*, aka *Zatoichi's Bloody Path*), the 17th film in the legendary Chanbara (Japanese Swordfighting) film series *Zatoichi*, *The Blind Swordsman* starring Shintaro Katsu. Called *Blind Fury*, the Tri-Star Pictures film directed by Phillip Noyce starred Rutger Hauer as a former Vietnam Vet blinded during the war and who was nursed back to health and taught to use a cane sword by an old Asian man. Returning to the U.S. many years later, he unwittingly is assigned the task of reuniting a son with his father. Also co-starring in the film were Terrance O'Quinn, Brandon Call, Noble Willingham, Lisa Blount, Nick Cassavetes, Rick Overton, Randall "Tex" Cobb, Charles Cooper, and Meg Foster. After repeated requests from the film's producers for help with the sword fights, Sho agreed to give Rutger Hauer a one-day crash course lesson on using a sword. Sho also agreed to make a cameo appearance at the end of the film as a Yakuza/ninja assassin hired by the film's villain to fight the blind swordsman. Filming the scene in Los Angeles, California in December 1988, Sho brought in his former student Eddie Tse to double for Hauer in the film's fantastic sword duel finale.

The following year would be a big one for Sho. After traveling all over the United States for various

business conferences and meetings, Sho traveled to Japan four times from October to December 1989. During these trips to Japan, Sho had numerous autograph and photo sessions with his many fans there. He was also interviewed by various magazines and trade periodicals. In fact Sho was featured in 168 different newspapers and magazines throughout Japan in 1989. More importantly, Sho's visits to Japan enabled him to make important contacts with film producers and gave him the opportunity to set up his new company in Tokyo called Sho Kosugi Corporation, LTD. The new company's main purpose would be to raise funds for future projects, to act as his agent in Japan for commercials, interviews, movies, etc...and to distribute Sho's movies. Sho also started a Tokyo branch of his fan club, which had already been in operation in the U.S. for quite some time along with Sho's company Sho Kosugi Ninja Enterprises, Inc.

Sho was approached by a number of Japanese publishing companies and asked to write about his experiences since moving to the United States as a young man. Part autobiographical, part inspirational, and part instructional, these books, of which there are at last count nine, are unfortunately only available in Japanese. Sho's first book was entitled *Sho Kosugi: Amerikan Doriimu Wo Jitsugen Shita Otoko* (Translation: *Sho Kosugi: The Man Who Achieved the American Dream*) and was published by Nitto Shoin on December 1st, 1990. Subsequent books written since then are: *American Survival* published by Kodansha on March 7th, 1993, *Sho Kosugi No Un Wo Tsukamu* (Translation: *Sho Kosugi: Grab Hold of the Luck!*) published by Kodansha on September 2nd, 1994, *Sho Kosugi No Ninja Shiki Jinsei Hissho Ho* (Translation: *Sho Kosugi: How to Win at Life with Ninja Style*) published by Bungeisha on November 20th, 1996, *Make Dreams Come True* published by Uinet on September 30th, 1997, *Boku No Eigo Mushashugyo: Atama Wa Iranai! Eikaiwa* (Translation: *My English was Learned by Traveling About to Gain Skill in Combat: Easy English Conversation*) published by Kodansha on June 15th, 1998, *Saikyo No Otoko Kane Kosugi Ni Naru 43 No Hisaku* (Translation: *43 Tips to Becoming the Strongest Man Kane Kosugi*) published by Kodansha on July 21st, 2000, *Hariuddo Shinema Eigo Dojo: Doryoku Wa Iranai! Eikaiwa* (Translation: *Hollywood Cinema English Language Dojo: Easy English Conversation*) published by Kodansha on Sept. 15th, 2000, and *Kodomo O Takumashiku Sodateru Honmono No Shitsuke* (Translation: *How to Raise a Child*) published by Business-Sha on August 1st, 2001.

After securing a lucrative multi-million dollar deal with SANYO, Sho began work on his next film project, a period samurai epic initially called *Shogun Mayeda*, later to be released as *Journey of Honor* in the U.S., as *Kabuto* in Japan, and as *Shogun Warrior* in the U.K. This film, a U.S., Japan, U.K. co-production, would mark a huge undertaking for Sho. Not only would he star in the film but he would also serve as co-writer and producer alongside executive producers Hiroshi Tsuchiya and Toshiaki Hayashi. After a substantial writing, pre-production and casting period, the film apparently went into production in late 1990





and/or early 1991 with a screenplay by Sho's writing partner Nelson Gidding, and with director Gordon Hessler at the helm. Sho had previously worked with Hessler on 4 episodes of *The Master* (including the series' best episode "Kunoichi"), as well as on two of Sho's best ninja films *Pray for Death* and *Rage of Honor*. Seeing that much of the film was rooted in the Jidai-Geki (Japanese Period Drama) genre, Sho hired Hiroshi Kuze, pupil of the late-great sword fight choreographer Ryu Kuze (*Seven Samurai*, *Yojimbo*, *The Challenge*) to choreograph the fighting in *Journey of Honor*. Hiroshi had recently choreographed the sword fights in the final *Zatoichi* movie starring Shintaro Katsu, released in 1989. With a reported budget of over 10 million dollars, Sho's first production featured an impressive cast of actors, including the legendary Japanese actor Toshiro Mifune who plays the role of Shogun Ieyasu Tokugawa (a role Mifune had previously played in the massive American TV mini-series *Shogun* starring Richard Chamberlain and Yoko Shimada). Also appearing in the film were famous Japanese actresses Miwa Takada and Nijiko Kiyokawa, as well as the great British actors Christopher Lee and John Rhys-Davies (who also appeared in *Shogun*). Actress Polly Walker, singer/actor David Essex, and actors Norman Lloyd and Ronald Pickup rounded off the stellar supporting cast. Co-starring with Sho in the film was his son Kane. This marked Kane's first big "grown up" role and he is absolutely fantastic in the film. The end result can only be described as Sho's masterpiece.

Filmed on location in Japan and Yugoslavia, the lush cinematography, great performances and engaging story come together to make one of the most unique and enjoyable adventure films ever made. Starting with the famous Battle of Sekigahara in 1600, the film tells the story of a journey to Spain by Shogun Ieyasu's most trusted vassal Daigoro Mayeda (played by Sho) and the Shogun's brash young son Yorimune (played by Kane) to get firearms needed to maintain peace in Japan. When asked to describe the film in an interview for a U.K. based magazine, Sho responded that it was "like *Shogun* in reverse." This is a very apt description, but the similarities between the two East meets West "fish out of water" sagas don't end there. Along with the presence of Toshiro Mifune playing the same role, both productions are based on true stories. Whereas James Clavell's *Shogun* is loosely based on the true story of English navigator William Adams' journey to Japan in 1600, Sho's *Journey of Honor* is loosely based on the true story of samurai Tsunenaga Hasekura's Trans-Pacific journey from Japan to New Spain (California, Acapulco, and Mexico) and his mission to Europe (Spain, France, and Italy) in order to discuss trade agreements with the Spanish crown in Madrid, and to meet with the Pope in Rome. Hasekura's journey was also the subject of famed Japanese author Shusaku Endo's novel *The Samurai* published in 1980. Although set a decade earlier than Hasekura's 1613 voyage, Mayeda's 1602 voyage in *Journey of Honor* recounts some of the same events, such as the meeting between samurai and the ruler of Spain, King Philip III (played by Christopher Lee). With impressive battle scenes and a rousing musical score composed by John Scott and

performed by the Hungarian State Opera Orchestra, *Journey of Honor* is a timeless classic sure to delight fans of both samurai films and adventure films. This swashbuckling samurai epic is unquestionably Sho's greatest artistic triumph.

Continuing in the period piece vein, Sho's next project would be a Japanese TV series called *Ryukyu No Kaze* (Literal Translation: *Wind of Ryukyu*). Likely shot in late 1992 and/or early 1993 in Okinawa, Japan, the Jidai-Geki series aired on NHK (Japan Broadcasting Corporation) from January 10, 1993 to June 13, 1993. The series was part of NHK's long running "Taiga Drama" series, which first began in April 1963. Airing each Sunday night, the Taiga Drama "block" usually airs one new story/series per calendar year, with each story usually running 52 weeks. The *Ryukyu No Kaze* story was a little shorter running just 23 weeks due to the fact that it was the first of a three-part renzoku series, and was the 31st NHK Taiga Drama series. Yoshiyuki Yoshimura and Takahiro Enokido shared directing duties on the series. Reportedly desperate to have Sho appear on the program, the producers paid him more for his supporting role than they did the lead actor, Noriyuki Higashiyama.

Starting in 1582, the series tells of how the Ryukyu Islands (of which Okinawa is the biggest), became part of Japan in the early 1600s. Sho plays the part of Shintenpu, the Ryukyu martial arts master who had studied Shorinji Kenpo in China. Faced with an impending invasion from the samurai of the Satsuma clan, Shintenpu must teach the Ryukyu villagers to defend themselves using Karate and Kobudo. Sho appeared in 10 episodes of this series, which was shown with English Subtitles on a local Japanese TV station in San Francisco. Sho's son Kane appears in at least 10 episodes of the series as Ken, an orphan whom Sho's character essentially adopts and teaches the martial arts to. The show is more of a drama than an action series, but Sho and Kane's presence on the show gives the viewer some wonderful training sequences, sparring matches and fight scenes. The series also co-starred a number of well known Japanese actors including: Kenichi Hagiwara, Toru Emori, Kenji Sawada, Norihei Miki, Sumiko Fuji (aka Junko Fuji), Akira Kobayashi and Youki Kudoh (who's had quite a bit of success in Hollywood, subsequently starring in high profile films such as *Picture Bride* and *Snow Falling on Cedars*, and also appearing in *Rush Hour 3* starring Jackie Chan, Chris Tucker, and Hiroyuki Sanada).

Immediately on the heels of *Ryukyu No Kaze*, Sho appeared in a Japanese Yakuza film called *Kyokuto Kuroshakai* (Literal Translation: *Far East Dark Society*) directed by Shokaku Baba. Produced by TOEI, the company that invented the Yakuza film genre, the film co-stars popular Japanese actors Koji Yakusho and Masahiko Kondo, along with Jessica Lancelott, Sawako Kitahara, Daisuke Nagakura, Reiko Saito, and Kiyoshi Nakajo. The legendary Hong Kong actor Jimmy Wang also appears in the film as the Triad Boss. Filmed on location in Japan in 1993, *Kyokuto Kuroshakai* tells the story of a pair of Asian-American policemen who come to Japan to infiltrate and take down a deadly "drug connection" consisting of members of the Yakuza



(Japanese Mob), the Triad (Hong Kong Mob) and the Mafia (Italian-American Mob). Sho plays Larry Matsuda, one of the Asian-American policemen. Going undercover he infiltrates the organization and when his cover is blown, all hell breaks loose. Although ultra-violent and containing very little martial arts, this film is quite good, with Sho and Koji Yakusho both giving excellent performances.

Somewhere around this time, Sho was called upon to voice the title character in the first episode of *Ultraman Powered: The Ultimate Hero* (aka *Ultraman: The Ultimate Hero*), a 13 part half-hour science fiction television series that his son Kane had done in the summer of 1993 in Los Angeles, California. Originally filmed completely in English, the series, a co-production between Steppin Stone Entertainment and



**Sho provide the Japanese dub for Ultraman in *Ultraman Powered*.**

Tsuburaya Productions, would need to be dubbed into Japanese for its release in Japan. Sho was asked to dub the voice of Ultraman Powered in the series premiere which made its debut on Japanese home video on December 17th, 1993. Oddly enough, the original English language version (which does not feature Sho's voice, but does feature Kane's real voice) has never been released legitimately in any form in the U.S. where it was made.

Sho's next projects in Japan seem to have been two modern-day martial arts films starring his son Kane. Directed by Sho and produced and released by the TOEI Company, *Za Kakuto Oh* (*The Fighting King*) and *Za Kakuto Oh 2* (*The Fighting King 2*), can best be described as a cross between TOEI's 1974 trilogy *Satsujin-Ken* (*Street Fighter*) starring Japanese martial arts movie legend Shinichi "Sonny" Chiba (also well known for his many turns as a ninja in Japanese period films and television, most notably as the samurai/ninja Jubei Yagyu and Iga ninja Hanzo Hattori, Shinpachi Tsuge, and Hanzo Tarao). In the two films written by Isao Matsumoto, screenwriter of Chiba's classic *Shorinji Kenpo* (*The Killing Machine*) and *Kyokuto Kuroshakai* (*Drug Connection*), Kane plays Japanese-American martial artist Ken Oshiro who, after the death of his father Kiyotake (played by Hiroshi Miyauchi), goes to Tokyo, Japan with his sister Aya to enroll in the World Martial Arts Championship in his father's place. In Japan, he stays with a friend of his father's, fellow Shoen Ryu Kenpo master Munehisa Tachibana (played by Yasuaki Kurata, an excellent martial artist and master of Shito Ryu Karate who starred in some pretty good ninja films made in Hong Kong about the same time that Sho was making his ninja films in the U.S.). Kane's character also has a romance with Tachibana's daughter Noriko

(played by Taeko Nishino). After putting his father's remains to rest in his native Okinawa, Ken begins intense training with an old Okinawan man (Hideyo Amamoto). Everything comes to a head when Ken fights the best martial artists from around the world in a no-holds-barred competition to determine who will ultimately be crowned the 'fighting king'. After the tournament, Ken prepares to return to the U.S., but an unexpected tragedy forces him to stay in Japan. The second film has him taking revenge on the bad guys responsible for the deaths of the people he loved. As a first time director, Sho does a good job at moving the action along and putting Kane's amazing skills in full view. Kane's fighting in these two films is very impressive. He has definitely lived up to the potential we first saw in *Revenge of the Ninja*.

After a hectic 1993, Sho's next on-screen appearance would be in his son Kane's Japanese TV series *Ninja Sentai Kakuranger*. This weekly half hour TV series about a group of monster fighting teenagers with the ability to transform themselves into super heroes was TOEI's 18th Super Sentai series and marked the 20th Anniversary of TV Asahi's Sentai Series block of programming. The plot of the series was that 400 years earlier, the ninja and the Yokai (demons) had a great war. The legendary Sasuke Sarutobi and four other ninja had sealed up the Yokai commander Nurarihyon and all his powers in a cave protected by the 'Seal Door'. In the present, the only surviving Yokai, Kappa, had tricked Sasuke and Saizo, the descendants of Sasuke Sarutobi and Saizo Kirigakure, into releasing the Yokai by opening the Seal Door.

Joined by three other descendants of great ninja, Tsuruhime, Seikai, a descendant Seikai Miyoshi, and Jiraiya (played by Kane), a descendant of the original Jiraiya, they become the Kakurangers in order to fight the Yokai. Helping to guide them on their quest to rid the world of the Yokai was legendary ninja, Sandayu Momochi. The basic premise of the series would later be used in the third season of the show's American counterpart, *Mighty Morphin' Power Rangers*. Sho's two-part appearance had him playing Gali, a mysterious character who comes to Japan from

**Ninja Sentai Mania! Both Sho and Kane appeared in *Ninja Sentai Kakuranger*.**





the U.S. to do battle with his former student Jiraiya.

In flashbacks, we discover that many years earlier Gali had made a pact with a demon in order to save his daughter's life after a horrible car accident. After keeping his end of the bargain, the demon had cursed Gali and caused him to transform into the evil character that killed Jiraiya's father. To atone for his crime, Gali had taken Jiraiya under his wing and taught him Karate and Ninjutsu. Sho's two episodes, directed by Shohei Tojo, are definitely the best in the series which ran from February 18th, 1994 to February 25th, 1995, with Sho's episodes (#28 and #29) airing August 26th, 1994 and September 2nd, 1994. Although different from his American productions, *Ninja Sentai Kakuranger* marked a return to the ninja genre that first made Sho a star. The two episodes contain nearly non-stop fighting between Sho and Kane, showing that Sho hasn't lost any of his skills over the years and that Kane is getting better and better.

Sho's next project would take him in a slightly different direction. Joining forces with the Atlantic Syndication Network, Sho created, produced, and starred in a weekly half-hour instructional TV series called *Sho Kosugi Self Defense & Ninjaerobics* (aka *Masters of the Martial Arts Starring Sho Kosugi*). Starting on March 16th, 1996 on ICN (International Cable Network), the series reportedly ran for two years with Sho visiting a variety of martial arts masters in Japan, China, Korea and other Asian Countries. The show also had regular segments showing the audience how to react to certain situations and how to get in shape while learning self-defense the "Ninjaerobics" way.

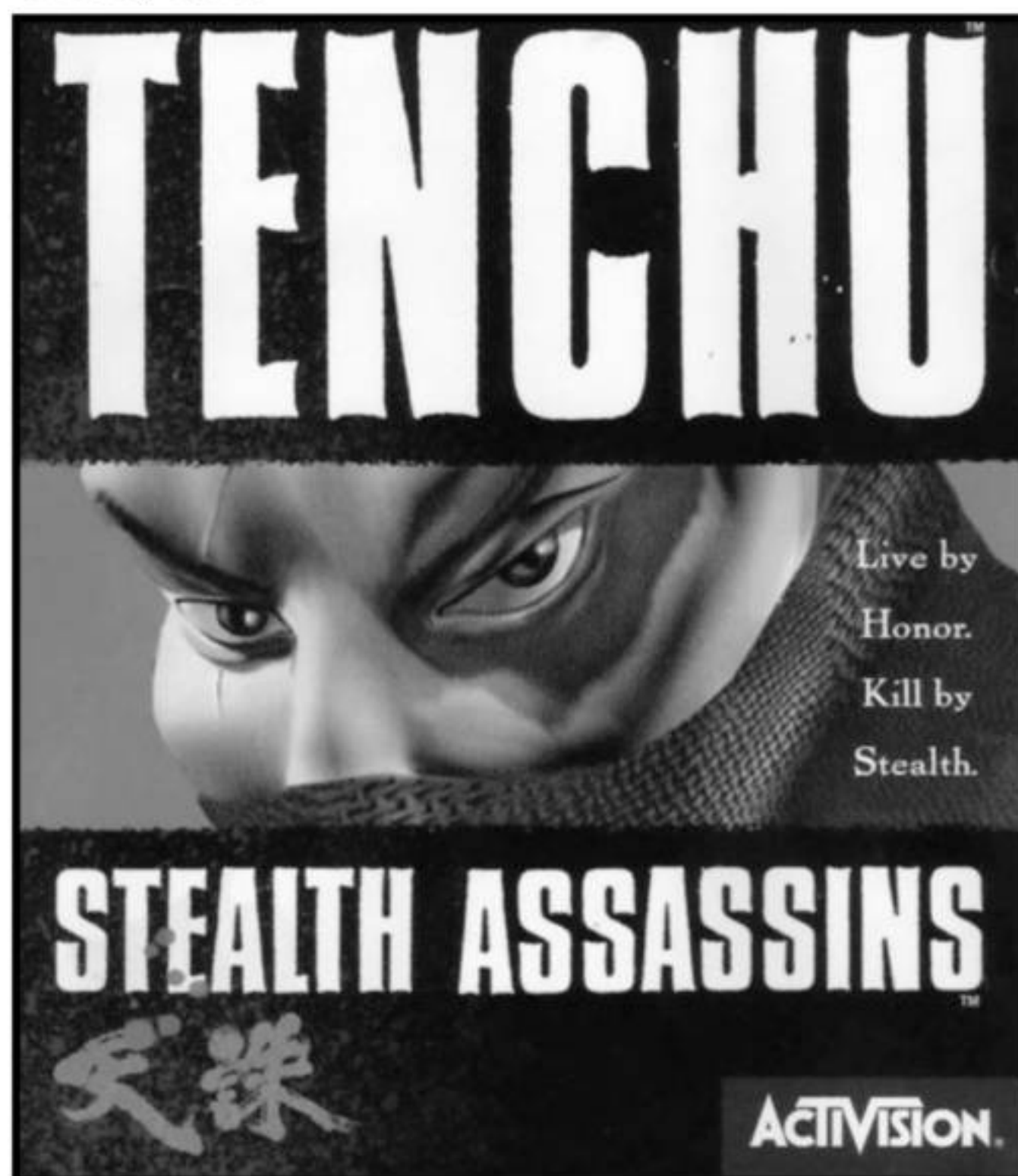
On November 30th, 1996, Sho briefly returned to episodic Japanese TV, appearing in a special guest starring cameo role in yet another of his son Kane's television series, *Seiryu Densetsu* (*Legend of St. Dragon*). This 10 episode series about a young schoolgirl (played by Yumi Adachi) who possesses magical martial arts powers aired on NTV (Nippon Television Network) from October 19th, 1996 to December 21st, 1996. Sho appears in episode 7 as Shusaku Sendo, father of Kane's character Daisaku Sendo. Shusaku is both a martial artist and a cook at a restaurant that Kane, Jun Toba and Yumi Adachi's characters go to. Later, Sho and Kane, whose character is cursed by an evil spirit in the episode, have an impressive fight in a school hallway. The episode was directed by Ryuichi Inomata and also featured regular cast members Kanako Enomoto, Junko Igarashi, and Tsurutaro Kataoka. The series had some other big name guest stars, in particular martial arts film legends Sonny Chiba in episode 1 and Yukari Oshima in episode 5.

## CHAPTER V: New Endeavors (1998-Now)

Sho's next endeavor would be to fulfill one of his lifelong dreams of opening up a school devoted to helping Asians make it in Hollywood. Originally supposed to be called HIFA (Hollywood International Film Academy), the name was eventually changed to SKI (Sho Kosugi Institute), with the first branch opening up in Hollywood, California in September 1998

and a second branch opening up in Nagoya, Japan in February 1999. Subsequent schools have been opened in Tokyo, Osaka, and Fukuoka, and Sho plans to expand to Taiwan, Korea, China and Europe. The school in Hollywood is open to Asians sixteen years or older, whereas the schools in Japan are aimed at children fifteen years or younger. With semesters starting in September and April, students can study gymnastics, acting, dance, singing, martial arts, English, and taiko (Japanese drums). Sho is reportedly very hands-on in the running of the schools, even teaching some classes himself. Sho's son Shane is a supervisor at the school in Nagoya.

Around the same time he was making SKI a reality, Sho got involved with the Sony PlayStation video game *Tenchu: Stealth Assassins*. Released by Activision in September 1998 the video game, about a group of ninja warriors in feudal Japan seeking justice against an evil warlord, was a huge seller in both Japan and the United States. Motion captures of Sho and Kane were used to create the realistic and fluid movements of the game's ninja characters. Sho's movements were used for the lead character Rikimaru, while Kane's movements were used for the alternate lead character, the tomboy ninja Ayame. Sho also voiced his character Rikimaru in the Japanese version of the game. A video showing Sho and Kane doing these video captures was offered as a special bonus to people who pre-ordered the video game in early 1998.



Also in 1998, using members of SKI, Sho created Ninja Taiko, which combines traditional Japanese taiko with martial arts and acrobatics. The Ninja Taiko Group has since performed at various public events in Los Angeles, including one that caught the eye of a director which led him to ask them to do the taiko drum score for the movie *The Scorpion King*, which Sho choreographed.



In 2001, Ninja Taiko became a stage play called *The Ninjas from Hollywood*. Sho produced and starred in the original production along with his son Shane, and a number of singers and actors from the Sho Kosugi Institute. The show was reportedly an extravaganza of martial arts, romance and music in the tradition of *West Side Story*, and they toured Japan in both 2001 and 2002.

On March 28th, 2005, Variety.com posted an announcement that Sho Kosugi fans had been hoping and waiting years for in an article entitled "Kosugi will kick up 'Return' to ninja role". The article stated that a new Hollywood movie entitled *Return of the Ninja* was being scripted by Steven de Souza (*Die Hard*) and would be produced by Kevin Foster of Amazing Grace Films. Not to be confused with the proposed but never filmed mid-1990s movie of the same name (aka *Renegade Blade*, aka *The Last Ninja Hero*), which would've reunited Sho with former Cannon Group co-head Menahem Golan, this newly proposed movie would be financed by a group of Japanese investors who would bankroll 60% of the project's \$35 million budget. Sho would play Ohara, the last ninja master, who travels to the U.S. to find the American heir to the stealth martial arts legacy. A year and a half later, *Black Belt Magazine* ran an article entitled "Return of the Ninja!" in their November 2006 issue in which they interviewed Sho who reiterated that plans were underway to get the film to the screen.

While waiting for the project to get begin, Sho kept busy by doing an instructional TV series called *Itsudemo Dokodemo! Sho Kosugi No Taoru Ekusasaizu* (*Anytime Anywhere! Sho Kosugi's Towel Exercise*), which aired on the NHK Educational TV channel from December 2006 to February 2007. A book by the same name was also released at this time, while a follow-up video called *Sho Kosugi No Let's Taorusaizu* (*Sho Kosugi's Let's Towelcize*) was released on DVD in March 2008.



Unfortunately where *Return of the Ninja* is concerned, no further info has been released since the *Black Belt Magazine* article and so it appears that the project will not come to fruition after all. This is as surprising as it is disappointing considering the fact that after a drought that spanned most of the 1990s and early 2000s, ninja

ninja characters have finally started to re-emerge in substantial American movies in recent years. Whereas ninja characters have never gone "out of style" in Japan, appearing frequently on TV and movies like legendary Japanese director Masahiro Shinoda's 1999 remake of

*Fukuro No Shiro* (*Owls' Castle*), the same can't be said for Hollywood.

Thankfully the ninja have stepped out of the shadows again in films like the period epic *The Last Samurai* (2003) starring Tom Cruise and Ken Watanabe, and in comic book adaptations like *Daredevil* (2003) starring Ben Affleck and Jennifer Garner, and its spin-off *Elektra* (2005) also starring Jennifer Garner. Heck, even Batman himself has become a ninja, first in the long-running TV series *Batman: The Animated Series* starring Kevin Conroy where his ninja training is shown in an episode entitled "Night of the Ninja", which also features a rival ninja character named Kyodai Ken voiced by none other than *Pray for Death's* Robert Ito, and then in the most recent live-action movies *Batman Begins* (2005) and *The Dark Knight* (2008) starring Christian Bale.

Sho's two sons have also gotten into the mix, with eldest son Kane making impressive appearances in both the video game adaptation *DOA: Dead or Alive* (2006) directed by Corey Yuen (*Ninja in the Dragon's Den*) where he played the ninja Ryu Hayabusa, and in *War* (2007), a film revolving around rival Japanese Yakuza and Chinese Triad gangs and also featuring a short ninja scene, where Kane played a yakuza warrior/henchman who sword fights his boss played by Ryo Ishibashi. He has another fight against none other than legendary martial arts movie star Jet Li, choreographed by Corey Yuen.

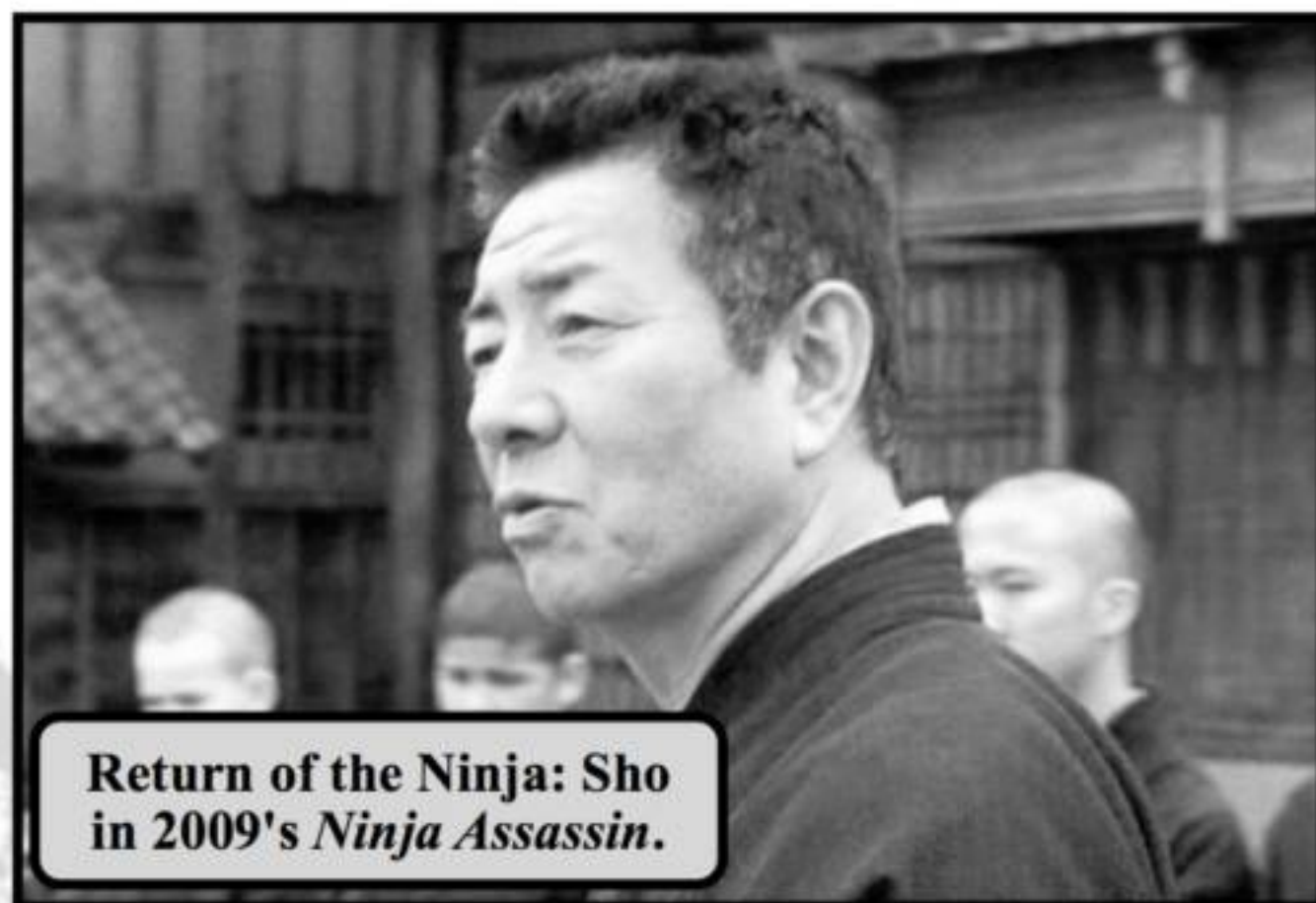




the *Tokugawa Buraicho* TV series in 1992, all starring Sonny Chiba. While all of these have their merits, what Sho Kosugi/ninja movie fans all over the world really wanted was for the "Master Ninja" himself to return to the screen and play a ninja at least one more time...

And then in the Spring of 2008, when it was looking less and less likely that Sho's return to the ninja movie genre would be happening, there came word that mega producer Joel Silver and the Wachowski brothers (of *The Matrix* fame) were co-producing a new ninja epic in conjunction with Warner Bros. and that a certain legend of the genre might be involved. This was confirmed in the Warner Bros. press release on May 29th, 2008. Sho Kosugi was indeed a part of the new film *Ninja Assassin* playing the ruthless leader of the Ozunu ninja clan hunting for a renegade former member played by the film's lead, Korean pop music sensation and actor Rain. And unlike *Return of the Ninja*, whose status remained unknown, this production was already well underway with filming having started a month earlier on April 28th. Shot on location in Berlin, the shoot wrapped up principle photography at the end of June.

Director James McTeigue (*V For Vendetta*), stars Rain and Naomie Harris, and producer Joel Silver attended the 2008 Comic-Con in San Diego in late July to talk about the film and were asked numerous times about Sho's involvement. Director McTeigue revealed that he'd been a ninja movie fan growing up and thought it would be cool to have Sho in the film as an homage to him and his great ninja movies. The film's stunt coordinators/second unit directors Chad Stahelski and



**Return of the Ninja: Sho in 2009's *Ninja Assassin*.**

David Leitch also stated in interviews that they were big Sho Kosugi fans and thrilled to have him in the movie, referring to Sho as a master martial artist who's still in fantastic shape.

On November 19th, 2009, Sho attended the Hollywood premiere of *Ninja Assassin* at the famed Grauman's Chinese Theatre before traveling to Hong Kong to attend his son Kane's wedding on November 21st. Father and son had been estranged since 2002 when Kane had decided to leave Sho Kosugi Productions and SKI (Sho Kosugi Institute), taking members of Sho's staff with him in the process to start his own agency. Sho had hoped his son would continue to help with his Sho Kosugi Institutes while continuing to pursue his dream of becoming an action star, but Kane wanted to strike out on his own, thus causing a deep rift between them. The



**Ninja warriors fight to the death as Raizo (Rain) and Ozunu (Sho Kosugi) lock blades in combat.**



reunion at such a happy event is something all Kosugi fans had been hoping for. The celebration continued when *Ninja Assassin* opened four days later on November 25th. The \$40 million budget film grossed over \$13 million in its opening weekend in North America and went on to gross over \$61 million worldwide (\$38+ million domestically and \$23+ million internationally), making it an unquestionable box-office success.

Reviews for the film were mixed, but then ultra-violent ninja movies aren't everyone's cup of tea. Some complained about the overuse of CGI and the overall darkness in the fight scenes, both valid observations, but ultimately the good far outweighed the bad for most ninja movie fans. Sho's performance was pretty unanimously applauded amongst the film's intended audience, with many saying that he stole the film. Yes indeed, as expected Master Sho has done it again. His absolutely fantastic performance as the evil clan leader Ozunu has given us yet another instantly iconic ninja character. The film also boasts an impressive performance from newcomer Rain as Raizo (named after the late Japanese actor Raizo Ichikawa, who starred in the classic 1960s ninja movie series *Shinobi No Mono*), whose incredible dedication to the intense training for the role really paid off on screen.

Other stand out performances in the engaging and entertaining film included British actress Naomi Harris as Mika Coretti, Korean pop star Joon Lee as teenage Raizo, and Japanese actress Anna Sawai (who appeared on a Japanese TV episode with *Kyokuto Kuroshakai* and *Za Kakuto Oh 2* actress Reiko Saito) as teenage Kiriko. The film is a blend of old and new with elements of Sho's classic '80s ninja movies merging with Japanese anime like *Ninja Scroll* to create a new style of ninja movie that still manages to retain what made them so cool in the first place. From a story stand point, the film bears quite a few similarities to Sanpei Shirato's classic Japanese manga *Kamui Gaiden*, which was also made into a highly enjoyable and entertaining live-action feature film released a few months earlier in Japan.

Some purists have complained about the decision to use mixed martial arts instead of sticking to the more traditional ones used in the past, but generally speaking most people found the action both visually stunning and viscerally satisfying. The final duel between Rain and Sho amidst roaring flames is particularly impressive and



reminiscent of another on-screen father and son duel between Japanese movie legends and master martial artists Sonny Chiba as the one-eyed samurai/ninja Jubei Yagyu and Tomisaburo Wakayama as his father Munenori Yagyu at the end of *Samurai Reincarnation* (1981).

Sho's duel against Rain marked the fourth time one of his characters has squared off against a character played by a Korean actor, having previously battled Tae Kwon Do master Jun Chong in *America Banmungaeg* (1976), Korean actor David Chung (who grew up in Japan) in *Ninja III: The Domination* (1984), and Japanese-born Korean actor Soon-Teck Oh (who has training in Kendo and Judo) in *The Master – "Out-of-Time-Step"* (1984), where Sho doubled for Lee Van Cleef.

Prior to the theatrical release of *Ninja Assassin*, the last real big screen American-made "ninja movie" released was Universal Pictures' *The Hunted* starring Christopher Lambert, John Lone, Yoshio Harada, Yoko Shimada, Tak Kubota, and Joan Chen back in 1995. To say it was long overdue would be an understatement. And nothing could be more fitting than for Sho Kosugi, the man who brought this new genre of ninja movie to such great heights and worldwide popularity, to be brought in to be a big part of it. My thanks and gratitude to the filmmakers for paying proper homage to Sho-san, and for giving him a role that was both substantial and worthy of him and his ninja movie legacy. With *Ninja Assassin* the modern-day ninja movie is back with a vengeance and so is the legendary Sho Kosugi!

Before the release of *Ninja Assassin*, a made-for-TV movie entitled *Mask of the Ninja* starring Casper Van Dien, Anthony Brandon Wong, Bellamy Young, Kristy Wu, and Yuji Okumoto (who had played Sho's son in *Aloha Summer*), was available to view on an on-demand channel in August 2008 before making its TV premiere on the Spike TV channel in April 2009. Okumoto also co-wrote, produced, and starred in a superior 9-minute TV pilot called *Katana* about the Yakuza underworld and featuring a brief ninja scene which was released online at [www.Strike.tv](http://www.Strike.tv) in December 2008. Another movie simply called *Ninja* starring Scott Adkins, Tsuyoshi Ihara, Mika Hijii, and featuring a cameo by Fumio Demura was released theatrically in Malaysia in October 2009, but was generally relegated to a direct-to-DVD release in most places, including North America. The film, which could easily have been called 'American Ninja 6', is certainly better than the virtually unwatchable *Mask of the Ninja*, but still not very good by any stretch of the imagination.

Another new ninja movie called *The Last Ninja* was rumored to be in the works, indicating not only that ninja movies have returned, but that they might be sticking around for a while. One can only hope that if this happens, the "Master Ninja" himself, Sho Kosugi, will play a big role in this new wave, just like he did in the 1980s and in his exciting and triumphant return in *Ninja Assassin*.

Another even more exciting bit of news was posted on Sho's official website blog on July 4, 2008. The entry stated the following: "Sho has returned from Germany following the filming of *Ninja Assassin*. Sho



has started working on his next film." Could this be the long awaited *Return of the Ninja*, or is the Master Ninja at work on another project? Could we be in the midst of a new ninja craze? Stay tuned. More recently in February 2011, Sho's official staff blog reported that Sho had been featured in articles in a number of Japanese newspapers and websites talking about a new movie that he'd been considering for years. The movie would be based on the Shikoku Pilgrimage of 88 temples around the island. No word on whether or not the proposed movie would star Sho or if it would

involve any martial arts, but hope springs eternal...

Regardless of what the future holds, Sho Kosugi's place in film history is assured and his name will forever be synonymous with the word *Ninja*.

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*The original version of this article was first published on [www.ShoKosugiTheNinja.com](http://www.ShoKosugiTheNinja.com). It has been reprinted with permission.*

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# MOREAU, WHAT HAVE YOU WROUGHT?

## RUMINATIONS ON THE PAST AND FUTURE OF MAD SCIENCE IN THE PHILIPPINES

By Bryan L. Yeatter

In H.G. Wells' classic 1896 science fiction novel *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, the protagonist is Edward Prendick, a shipwreck survivor adrift in a lifeboat who is rescued in the South Pacific by a passing vessel bound for the titular island. After being taken to the island, Prendick meets Moreau and quickly becomes aware of the doctor's curious activities, monkeying with evolution, so to speak. The ship has also brought animals for Moreau to experiment with, and it is the tormented wailing of a pathetic puma in Moreau's lab one evening that has Prendick fleeing the house in panic and revulsion. Once out in the jungle, however, he finds that the island is populated by bizarre man-beasts, all the byproducts of Moreau's attempt to create an animal-human hybrid. Well, they don't call it mad science for nothing.

After he had been rescued from drifting aimlessly in his lifeboat, Prendick had been told the ship that saved him was headed for an unnamed and unknown island. In this age of satellites, no such place exists anymore, but it is much easier to imagine that in 1896 there were still small islands here or there—particularly in the vast South Pacific—that had remained uncharted. Nowadays, if a mad scientist such as Moreau were looking for a propitious spot to test his theories, there is no doubt that the Philippine Islands would be an appealing option. Particularly in the Southern Philippines, there are plenty of sparsely populated islands where a deranged doctor could tinker with man and beast alike under cover of the jungles and far from the pesky interference of the mainland authorities. And as for the locals, if there are any, they are usually too weary of weird foreign recluses than to go nosing around in their business. Yes, the Southern Philippine Islands are a most appealing hideaway, and have already proven to be a popular haven for practitioners of mad science. There was, for instance, Dr. Marco, the mad doctor/vampire portrayed by Ronald Remy in *The Blood Drinkers* in 1964, as well as Remy's portrayal of Dr. Lorca in the notorious *Mad Doctor of Blood Island* (1969). Dr. Lorca was back in a more malevolent turn by Eddie Garcia in *Beast of Blood* (1970), seeking donors for head transplant operations and the like. And who can forget crazy Nancy Kwan and her basement full of assorted beasts (as well as her army of scantily clad kung fu babe enforcers) in *Wonder Women* (1973)? Given its setting, a Moreau adaptation in the Philippines

would seem like a natural, but while Wells' novel has served as the inspiration behind a number of loose treatments shot in the islands—some borrowing more liberally than others—there have been no official adaptations. And yet, Wells' fingerprints are all over these films.

Although pared down considerably from its source material, Gerardo de Leon's *Terror Is a Man* (1959) is very obviously drawn from Wells. The film's plot simplifications are an obvious byproduct of its budgetary constrictions, narrowing Moreau's menagerie of beasts to a single creature, but it is still an effectively mounted narrative. In de Leon's film the shipwrecked protagonist Fitzgerald (Richard Derr) is not taken to the island by another ship, but instead washes ashore in his lifeboat. He is then discovered by Dr. Gerard (Francis Lederer) and his assistant (Oscar Keesee), who come across the boat while out looking for Gerard's escaped experimental subject.



Staring terror in the face:  
1959's *Terror Is a Man*.



After reviving, Fitzgerald becomes aware of Gerard's experiments; a former New York City surgeon, Gerard had come to the island some two years earlier with his wife (Greta Thyssen) in order to indulge himself in unfettered experimentation. "I came to this island because it afforded me privacy," he explains to Fitzgerald, adding "There is no one here to waste my time." Apparently no one to answer to either, as the local natives—a tribe of some 50-75 people by Gerard's estimation—all flee the island after Gerard's creature escapes and kills a number of people in the village.

At first Gerard is vague in revealing the nature of his work, telling Fitzgerald that it is difficult to explain while giving him a most unhelpful description, saying that he is trying "to order certain functions." Eventually, Fitzgerald's curiosity and snooping lead to full disclosure from Gerard, who takes time to explain that he is working on the modification of species in order to create "a higher—a perfect—man." Gerard, in truest mad scientist reasoning, considers both man and animal to be imperfect creatures, but believing in evolution as scientists tend to do, he feels that both are building toward something. Impatient to see the resulting perfection that natural selection has in store, Gerard has decided to light a fire under nature's ass and had therefore come to the island with a black panther in tow. When Fitzgerald sees what Gerard has succeeded in turning the panther into he is shocked to observe that it is very obviously an animal with the outward form of



a man. It should surprise no one that Gerard's work does not end well.

By contrast, Dr. Gordon's experiments in *The Twilight People* (1972) are more expansive. They do, however, follow the same premise, as Dr. Gordon (Charles Macaulay) explains that the "ecological consequences of what we call civilization" threaten to make humankind an extinct species if man cannot adapt, and quickly. "The world is changing rapidly but man isn't," he says. After noting that there are lower species that are better equipped to adapt to the changing world, Gordon explains that "The human race cannot survive unless it remakes itself—now." And so, Gordon has taken it upon himself to save mankind. Naturally, such

lofty goals cannot be achieved without certain sacrifices being made along the way, and Gordon is very willing that others should be sacrificed for the good of the whole. But then, was there ever a mad doctor who did not acknowledge the necessity of the sacrifices of others? Consider it a kind of demented altruism if you like (you know, like socialism, for instance).

Gordon has obviously set up shop with much more in the way of resources than Gerard had. He has a



plush mansion, complete with an expansive basement laboratory, a cavern to house his experimental creatures, and a full compliment of goons to guard his fortress. He also has quite an array of hybrid beasts chained up, none of which inspires much confidence in his ability to ensure the future survival of a master species. There is a panther woman (Pam Grier in a, ahem, star-making role), a bat man (played by the film's sound editor Tony Gosalvez, who had also handled sound effects on *Terror Is a Man*), a dog woman, an ape man (of course), and an antelope man (Ken Metcalfe in what must surely be his greatest performance).



**Pam Grier bears her fangs as Ayesa, the panther woman in *The Twilight People* (1972).**

In the end, Gordon's noble effort to rescue mankind is sabotaged when his own daughter has an attack of conscience and lets his creatures loose, inspiring a weird bit of jungle warfare as Gordon's army tries to recapture the beasts (imagine, if you will, the sight of the antelope man lying in the brush firing an





in that product's initial television ad) is able to secure test subjects from the local prison in Pangan. Unfortunately, one of the unexpected results of Fleming's experiments is that his subjects, after exhibiting an initial positive response to treatment, begin to revert to a primitive state and become Neanderthal-like.

When one of Fleming's test subjects escapes and is shot to death by authorities, it brings American pathologist Dr. Alix Pardee (Antoinette Bower) to the area to investigate. Pardee winds up at the remote plantation where Fleming conducts his philanthropic mad science, and alt-

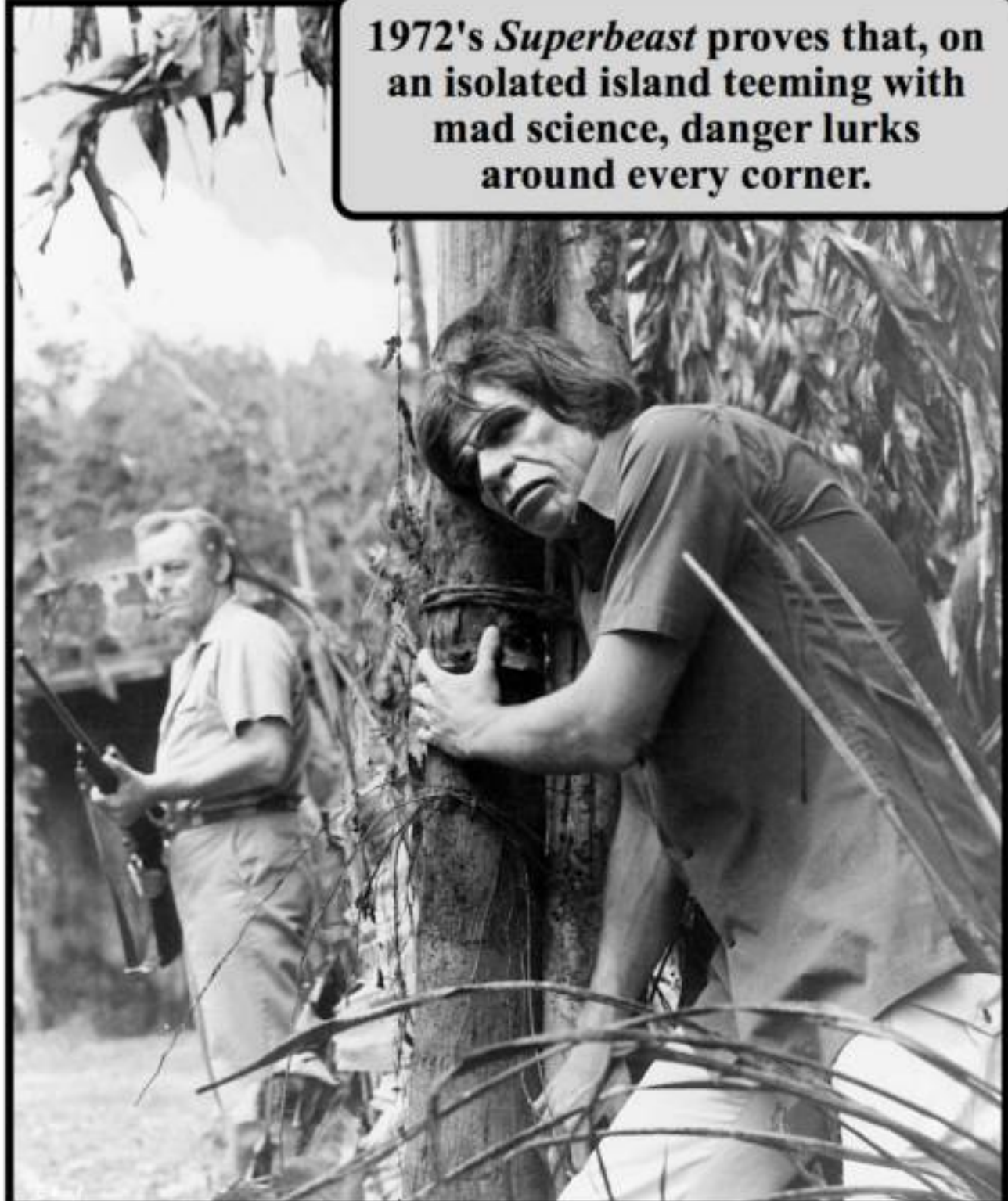
hough she is fascinated by his work, she is even more appalled at the methods by which Fleming disposes of his errors. In order to fund his work, Fleming had cut a deal with a wealthy American big game hunter (Harry Lauter), who agreed to bankroll the whole thing provided he can hunt down Fleming's unfortunate test

M-16—classic!). The film's high point is a catfight between the panther woman and the dog woman, but then catfights always score easy points (even when its cats and dogs). In the end, the not-so-good Dr. Gordon is killed by one of his test subjects—his own wife, as it turns out, whom he had transformed into a tree... person.



Somewhat different from Doctors Gerard and Gordon, Dr. Fleming in the film *Superbeast* (1972) is not trying to expedite the evolutionary process in order to ensure man's survival, but is instead working at altering the genetics of violent criminals in order to pacify them and make them useful members of society. Through an arrangement with a corrupt local policeman (Vic Diaz), Fleming (Craig Littler, who first uttered the famous question "Pardon Me, do you have any Grey Poupon?"

**1972's *Superbeast* proves that, on an isolated island teeming with mad science, danger lurks around every corner.**

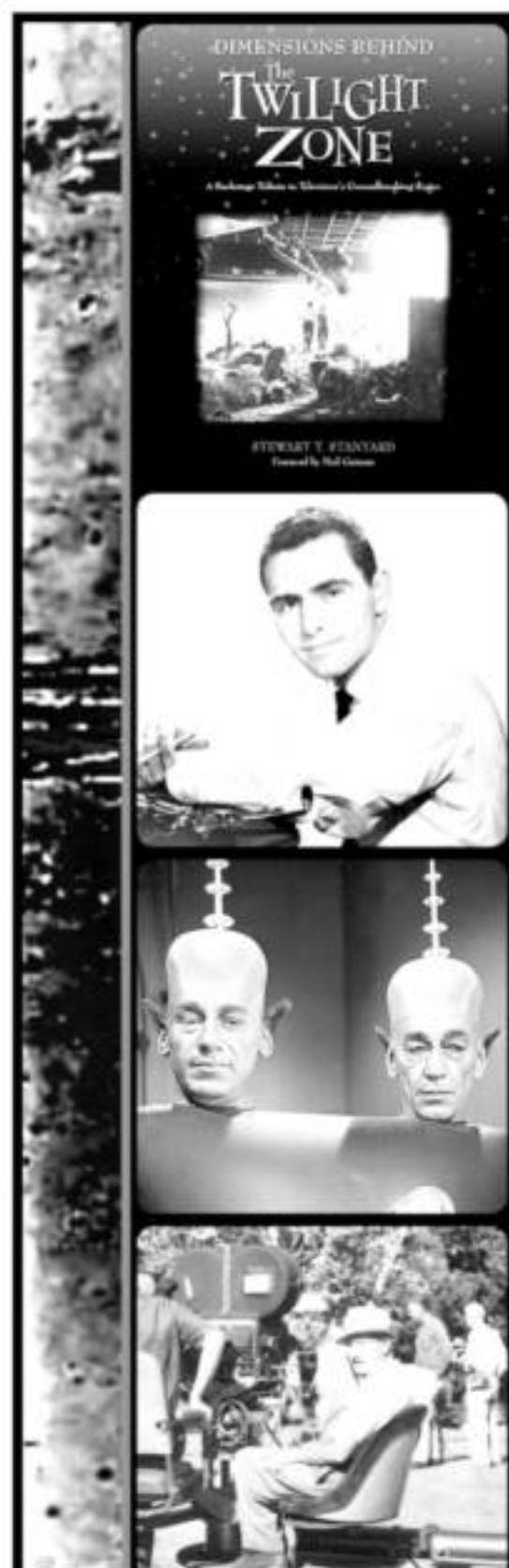




subjects after they have become beastly and are of no further good use to the experiment.

Pardee is sufficiently revolted by the whole thing that she takes the drastic step of dosing Fleming with his own medicine, literally making a monkey of the mad doc. After undergoing his transformation, Fleming kills his benefactor, and Pardee then departs the plantation, leaving the doctor alone to live out his days as a species of one. While loneliness has ever been a part of mad science—who is there that can truly understand them—Fleming's fate seems crueler than most. There is a very Wellsian moment in *Superbeast* wherein Pardee is awakened in the dead of night on the plantation by the shrill screaming of one of the doctor's test subjects, but even more interesting is a Freudian passage in which she dreams of being willingly taken by one of Fleming's monkey men.

Clearly there was a generation of mad scientists who took their inspiration from Dr. Moreau and set up shop in the remote regions of the Philippine Islands. There is, therefore, every reason to suppose that when some mad scientist does eventually make that major breakthrough that will benefit the world and secure mankind's place in its future, it will come from the deepest recesses of the Philippines.



"Looking through these behind-the-scenes photos brings back many fond memories of Rod Serling and those early days working on such a remarkable piece of television history."

— William Shatner  
("Nick of Time" and "Nightmare at 20,000 Feet")

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A visually stunning backstage glimpse into the history and making of Rod Serling's classic television series, *Dimensions Behind the Twilight Zone* includes rare documents, over 350 original behind-the-scenes photographs, and tributes from several creative Hollywood personalities.

## DIMENSIONS BEHIND THE TWILIGHT ZONE

The book also features informative and analytical chapters by the author and a plethora of interviews with alumni such as Bert Granet, Richard Donner, Richard Matheson, along with several veteran actors, as well as candid interviews with Carol Serling and Rod's brother, Robert Serling.



# NIGHT STALKING: THE TV TERROR OF DAN CURTIS

By Jon Towlson

Dan Curtis is a key figure of TV horror in the 1960s and 1970s, producing and directing some of the most effective and successful made-for-TV movies of all time and creating some of the most frightening images ever seen on the small screen. In terms of output and quality, Dan Curtis stands alongside Rod Serling and Alfred Hitchcock as one of television's great creators in the fields of fantasy, horror and suspense. In addition to the phenomenal *Dark Shadows*, which ran a total of 1225 episodes from 1966 to 1971, Curtis produced more than a dozen movies for television, many of which he also directed. Several of these: *The Night Stalker*, *The Norliss Tapes*, *Trilogy of Terror*, *Dead of Night* and *Dracula* are considered classics of the genre and are increasingly written about by film scholars. Indeed Curtis is undergoing something of a renaissance amongst fans, reviewers and critics, many of whom are discovering Curtis's work for the first time thanks to the recent *Dark Shadows* movie; and with *The Night Stalker* (one of the most successful TV movies ever) soon to be remade by British director Edgar Wright, that resurgence is set to continue.

Dan Curtis is, I believe, one of the horror greats – ranking alongside George A. Romero, Wes Craven and David Cronenberg as a major player in 1970s horror: a producer with a sure sense of what scares an audience and a director with the ability to create almost text-book exercises in suspense and fear. The grinning Zuni doll's attack in *Trilogy of Terror*, the true face of 'Bobby' in *Dead of Night*, our first glimpse of the ghastly fanged Barry Atwater in *The Night Stalker*: these are moments of terror so acute as to be rare even in big screen movies – and almost unheard of in made-for-TV movies (the floating vampire-child in Tobe Hooper's TV movie *Salem's Lot* being a notable exception).

Stephen King described Dan Curtis as having "an unerring, crude talent for finding the terror place inside you and squeezing it with a cold hand." A detailed examination of Curtis's work reveals a directorial ability that is far from crude (although its effect is 'raw' terror). Curtis was a master of 'cat and mouse' suspense. His use of the camera was unequalled (at least in television); his



sense of editing faultless. Added to these, he had a natural instinct for storytelling for the small screen, combining a genuinely gothic sensibility with a talent for setting supernatural tales against the backdrop of everyday normality, pitting terror against mundane reality in

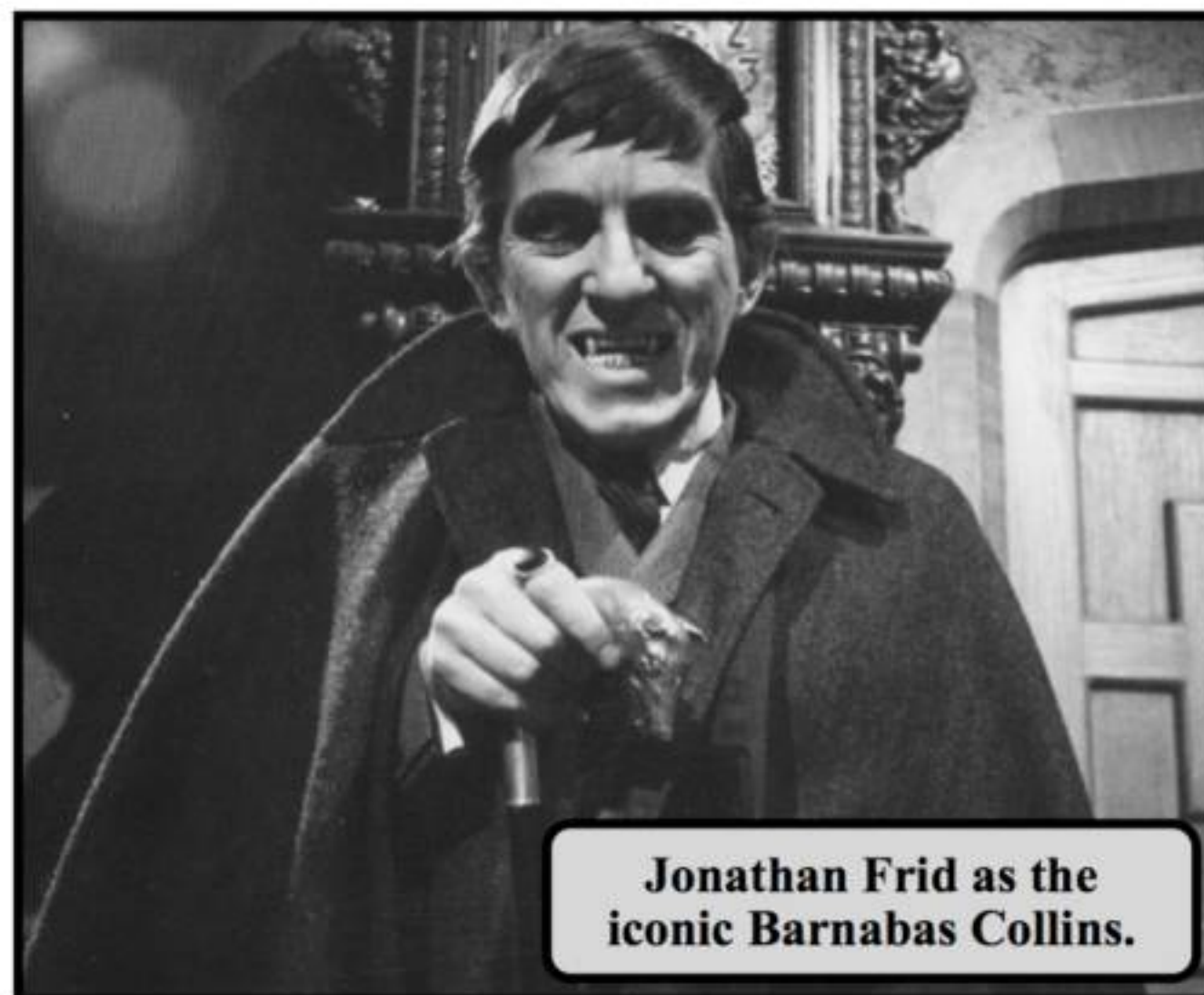
ways that seemed peculiarly suited to the medium of television. The garish setting of Las Vegas is the last place you might expect to find a vampire (*The Night Stalker*). And you would not expect to find an ancient warrior demon inhabiting the cheap novelty doll that Karen Black brings home to her modern apartment (and overbearing mother) in *Trilogy of Terror*.

His talent for terror is something that Curtis developed as his career went on; his love of the gothic he had from the start, born of his love of gothic literature, more specifically gothic romance of the Bronte type. *Dark Shadows* was, in fact, conceived as a Gothic Romance, before poor ratings made it necessary to introduce a supernatural element. In its first incarnation *Dark Shadows* was Curtis's *Jane Eyre*; the plot itself is a spin on Charlotte Bronte's classic novel: a governess takes a job with a wealthy family who live in a mysterious mansion filled with shadows and secrets. Despite his bluff exterior, Curtis was at heart a romantic and it is no surprise that later in his career he gravitated towards the romantic saga in *The Winds of War* and *War and Remembrance*. He was also a keen businessman who started in television as a sales executive and then a producer of golf shows. Curtis had a sure sense of the public's taste and a talent for matching it with his own. He was, as Stephen King observed, a throwback to an older and perhaps tougher



breed of Hollywood filmmakers. This versatility, tenacity and sheer bravado can be seen in the remarkable way Curtis turned *Dark Shadows* around at the end of its first series when ratings were low and the network threatened to cancel the series. If necessity is the mother of invention then surely *Dark Shadows* is a case in point. Curtis' solution to the problem – introducing supernatural and sci-fi elements to the gothic mix – is at once elegant and logical and far out. *Dark Shadows* became almost a compendium of the horror and science fiction genre, featuring many of its myths: time travel, vampirism, and lycanthropy. It was a brilliant ground-breaking move on Curtis's part, paving the way for a new breed of television series that combined aspects of soap opera with supernatural/sci-fi storylines. Indeed its influence on modern television – on the *Buffys*, the *Angels*, the *Ghost Whisperers*, the *Supernaturals* – is undeniable. Curtis understood that *Dark Shadows* found its perfect audience in teenagers, who in the 1960s were only just becoming a force within society. Many claimed the show as their own, attracted by its freewheeling innovation, wearing their allegiance to the show as a badge of the then-burgeoning youth consciousness in the culture at large.

It is telling that Curtis began his directing career at this time, on *Dark Shadows*, better to express the Dan Curtis 'vision'. He himself described it as a 'shaky start' and yet it is clear that Curtis was a fast learner. As producer and writer, Curtis was already responsible for much of *Dark Shadows*: the casting, the setting, the atmosphere. Curtis's mastery of camera and editing quickly followed, already honed by his close involvement with the production, which saw hours of excellent material produced every week. You only need look at the introduction of Barnabas Collins in the final episode of series one to see the extraordinary efficiency and



**Jonathan Frid as the iconic Barnabas Collins.**

elegance of the camerawork in *Dark Shadows*. The closing moments of series one, where Willie Loomis enters the crypt in search of the Collins treasure perfectly showcases Curtis's genius for mystery and suspense. The



scene is filmed for the most part in one continuous shot. The camera tracks back slowly as Collins enters, revealing Barnabas's coffin in the foreground. Willie's candle is the only light source in the crypt and flickers eerily, casting shadows all around. As Willie tentatively opens the coffin lid, the camera moves slowly and suspenseful into a close up of his terrified

face. Then a hand enters the frame – Barnabas's hand – drawing Willie down towards the coffin. The scene fades to black, letting our imagination do the rest...

This was our first glimpse of pure terror, Dan Curtis-style, of which there would be more to come.

The very first episode of *Dark Shadows* opens with the arrival of a train bringing Victoria Winters to Collinsport. It is fitting that Curtis's conception of the show grew from this single image. Many of his TV movies begin with the arrival of the protagonist at some mysterious place, often with the shot of a car pulling up outside a nice house, perhaps the home of the protagonist (in the case of 'Amelia' in *Trilogy of Terror* and 'Bobby' in *Dead of Night*) which becomes transformed into a place of terror as the story develops.

*The Night Stalker*, Curtis's first foray into contemporary modern horror after *Dark Shadows*, opens in

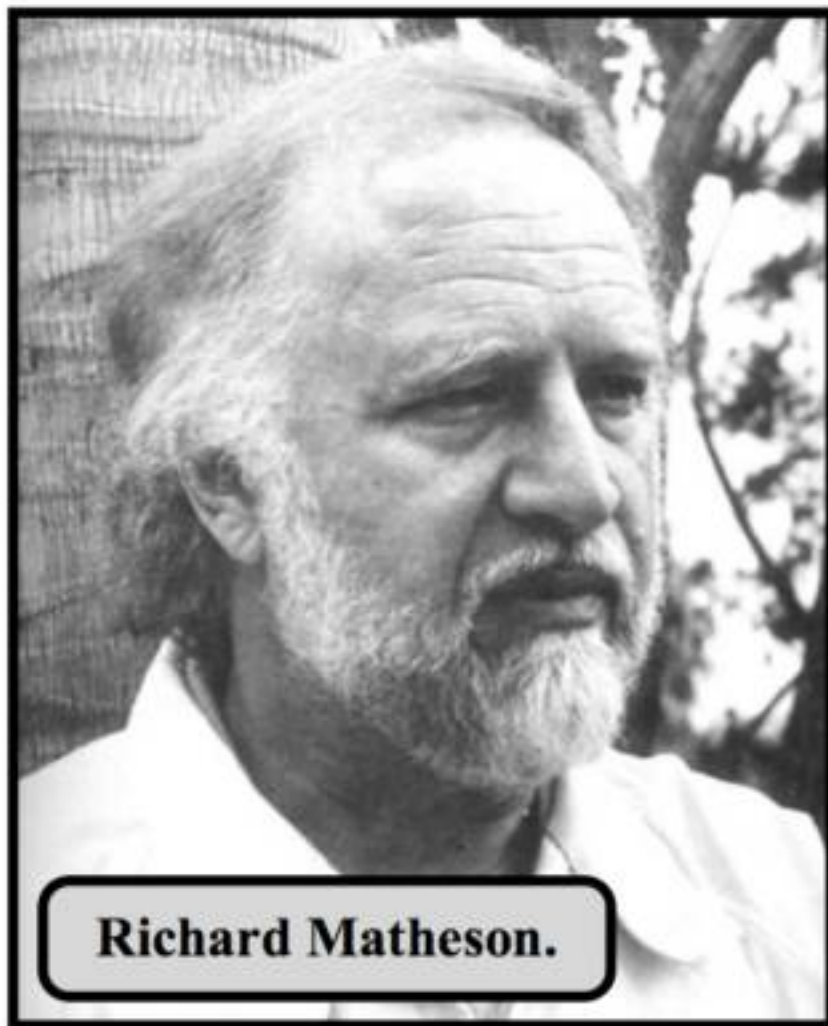


**The cast of *Dark Shadows*.**



the same innocuous manner. A young woman walks home through the backstreets of Las Vegas after finishing her shift at the casino where she works. As she ventures through an alleyway, past a corner, a hand shoots out of the shadows and grabs her by the throat. Although directed by TV veteran John Llewellyn Moxey, Curtis's stamp is all over *The Night Stalker* right from this opening scene, in which gothic horror intrudes shockingly onto garish neon lit reality.

It would be wrong, however, when discussing *The Night Stalker*, not to emphasise the importance of his collaboration with the distinguished novelist and screenwriter, Richard Matheson. Curtis and Matheson worked together on six TV movies (after *The Night Stalker* was *The Night Strangler* (1973), *Dracula*, (1974), *Scream of The Wolf* (1974), *Trilogy of Terror* (1975), and *Dead of Night* (1977) that, together, represent Curtis's greatest achievements. Matheson's contribution therefore cannot be underestimated. For his screenplay of *The Night Stalker* Matheson won an Edgar Award from the Mystery Writers of America. In many ways the collaboration between Matheson and Curtis is analogous to that of John Michael Hayes and Alfred Hitchcock. Hayes wrote some of what are arguably Hitchcock's best films, including *Rear Window* for which he, like Matheson, received an Edgar Award.



**Richard Matheson.**

Poe films, as well as adapting *The Devil Rides Out* (1968) for Hammer. For television he had written sixteen episodes of *The Twilight Zone* and the screenplay for Spielberg's *Duel* (1971), based on his own short story. As Stephen King has commented of Matheson, "perhaps above all else, Matheson excels at the depiction of one man alone, locked in a desperate struggle against a force, or forces bigger than himself." This is certainly true of *The Night Stalker* and consistent with the best of Matheson's and Curtis's subsequent work together. Carl Kolchak, the rebel reporter investigating the killings in *The Night Stalker*, finds himself not only battling a vampire but bureaucratic Las Vegas officials who have no time for his theories. And in the end, while he might defeat the forces of the supernatural, he cannot defeat the establishment who fire him from his job and cut him loose from Las Vegas. He is able to dispatch the bloodsucker, but as King comments, the final victor is Las Vegas boosterism.



Thematically, *The Night Stalker* was the perfect vehicle for the coming together of Matheson and Curtis and the melding of their sensibilities. The gothic horror of *The Night Stalker* contrasts with the mundane yet hard-nosed reality of politics, both of which threaten to destroy the lone protagonist, Kolchak. So successful was *The Night Stalker* that a sequel followed and then a series. Neither Curtis nor Matheson were involved in the series, *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* (1974-75), which ran for one season before it was cancelled after twenty episodes, but they collaborated again on the sequel *The Night Strangler* (1973), which Curtis directed as well



**Darren McGavin as Carl Kolchak.**



as produced.

The *Night Strangler* marked a step forward for Curtis as a director. *The Night Strangler* follows very closely the successful formula set by its predecessor. There is a mid-way action sequence in which the police realize the Strangler's power, a climactic encounter between Kolchak and the Strangler and once again Kolchak is forbidden from reporting the truth about the case by the authorities. But *The Night Strangler* features a more interesting backstory for the villain, who is a 19th century surgeon seeking to extend human life and needing victims for his experiments. There is also more emphasis on humour and an altogether better mix of humor and horror than in *The Night Stalker*. These improvements are courtesy of Matheson, who wrote *The Night Strangler* from scratch as an original script rather than as an adaptation of a novel.

However, much of *The Night Strangler's* success as a sequel can be attributed to Curtis. Kolchak's descent, at the climax of the film, into an eerie underground Seattle in search of the killer is pure Curtis. It is a startling intrusion of the gothic into the modern day world, complete with cobwebbed, candle lit corpses – a sure Curtis touch. Of the two Kolchak films *The Night Strangler* is the more assured, and this is partly due to Curtis's superior handling of suspense. The opening sequence of *The Night Strangler*, for example, is almost identical to that of *The Night Stalker* – a woman walks home alone at night through the city and is murdered by a stalker – but whereas *The Night Stalker* director John Moxey handles the scene in a rather perfunctory manner – giving us a brief moment of tension and then a shock – Curtis, by contrast, builds the sequence into a tour-de-force of suspense. As the woman walks through a dark alley, in the foreground a shape darts across the frame from left to right: the woman is being stalked. She turns and we cut to a close up of her looking behind her – no-one is there. She walks on and again in the shape crosses the frame – this time from right to left. A bottle breaks in shocking close up. The woman turns again. From her point of view we glimpse a figure hiding in the shadows. Panicking, the woman runs. Emerging from the alley, she stumbles into the path of a taxi cab – tries to flag it down but it drives on. Alone in the street but seemingly out of danger, the woman walks to a bus stop. She waits, lights a cigarette. Suddenly out of the shadows the killer

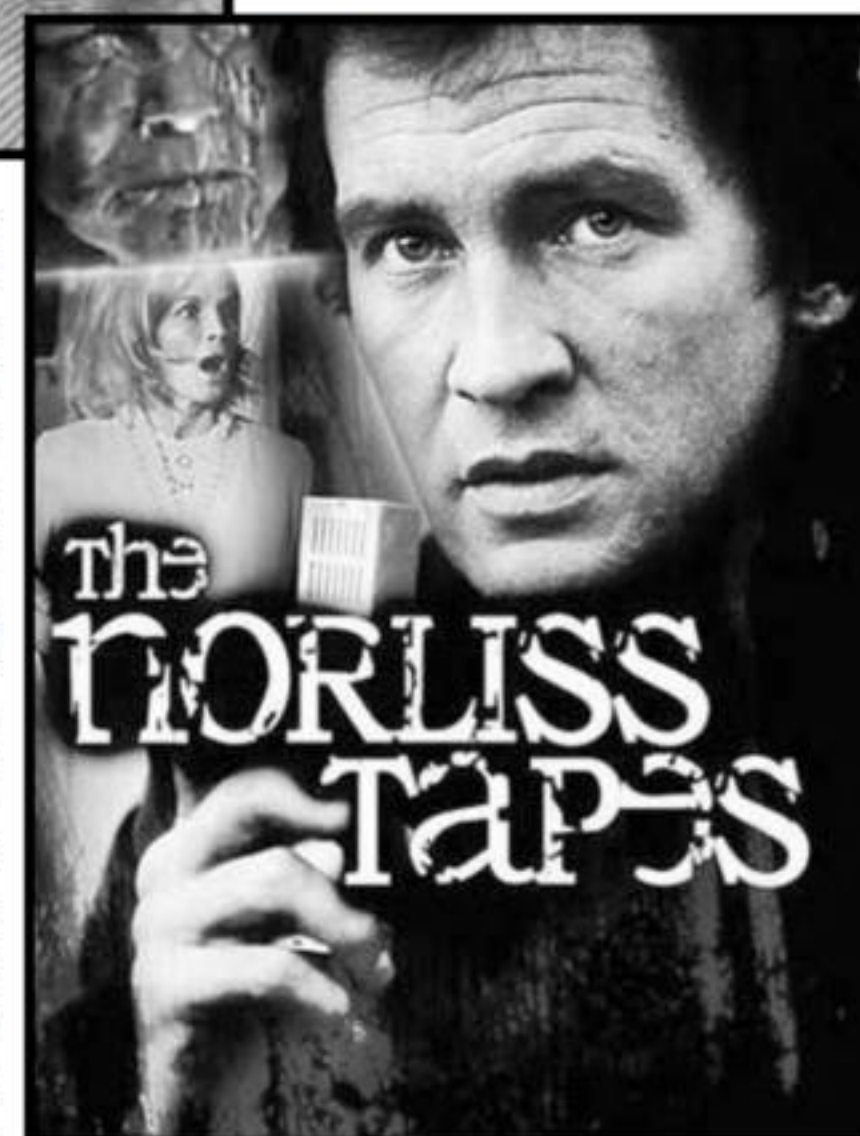
pounces, as if from nowhere..! The showmanship in the sequence is unmistakable: Curtis's bravura use of suspense is intended to hook the audience from the get go, and it succeeds magnificently. The only weakness in the sequence perhaps is Curtis's over-reliance on the telephoto zoom, a fault common to TV directors in the 1970s, but one Curtis was to eliminate as his directorial career progressed.

After the success of the Kolchak movies, Matheson and Curtis (with William F. Nolan) prepared an intended third film, *The Night Killers*, a story about android replicas. However, the station ABC decided they wanted a weekly series and both Matheson and Curtis declined involvement with what became *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*. Instead Curtis and Nolan developed *The Norliss Tapes* as a pilot for an intended series. Curtis

simply took some of the elements that had made the Kolchak movies successful and wove them into the character of David Norliss. Like Kolchak, Norliss is a journalist who must accept that the supernatural impinges on the modern day world and who has to conduct his own investigations in the face of a sceptical authority. Unlike Kolchak, however, Norliss actively seeks out the supernatural, rather than simply responding to incidents as Kolchak does. On that basis *The Norliss Tapes* is perhaps the better premise for a series, given that *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* ultimately failed because it stretched credibility: Kolchak just happened to stumble upon monsters wherever he



went. However, Norliss, as played by Roy Thinnes, lacks the sardonic humor of Darren McGavin as Kolchak. In any event, an extended writers' strike in 1973 killed off any hopes of a series of *The Norliss Tapes* and a sequel written by Nolan was never produced. As a





stand-alone, however, *The Norliss Tapes* remains a strong piece in itself: showcasing Curtis's gothic sensibility in his depiction of a rainy San Francisco haunted by family mausoleums and secluded houses.

Curtis followed *The Norliss Tapes* with *Scream of the Wolf* and *Dracula*, both of which were written by Matheson. *Scream of the Wolf* is perhaps the weakest of the Matheson-Curtis collaborations. Equal parts *The Most Dangerous Game* (USA *The Hounds of Zaroff*) and *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, it concerns a big game hunter asked to investigate a rash of possible werewolf killings. According to Matheson's biographer, Mathew R. Bradley, the weak script can be attributed to Matheson's too-faithful adaptation of David Case's novel *The Hunter* and suffers from a prosaic conclusion in which the apparently lycanthropic killings turn out to be the work of another hunter who enjoys the thrill of the chase too much.

Much better is *Dracula*, Matheson and Curtis's 1974 adaptation of the Stoker novel; indeed Curtis's is one of the best versions of Bram Stoker's story.



Matheson's script recast the count as a Transylvanian warrior haunted by the death of his wife, who discovers her reincarnation in Lucy. Thus Curtis's *Dracula* prefigures Coppola's significantly, and although Matheson and Curtis made a version faithful to the Stoker original, the romantic idea of Lucy as Dracula's dead wife reincarnated originates, however, not with Stoker, but with Dan Curtis, derived primarily from *Dark Shadows* in which Barnabas Collin searches for women who resemble his dead wife, Josette.

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**DRACULA**

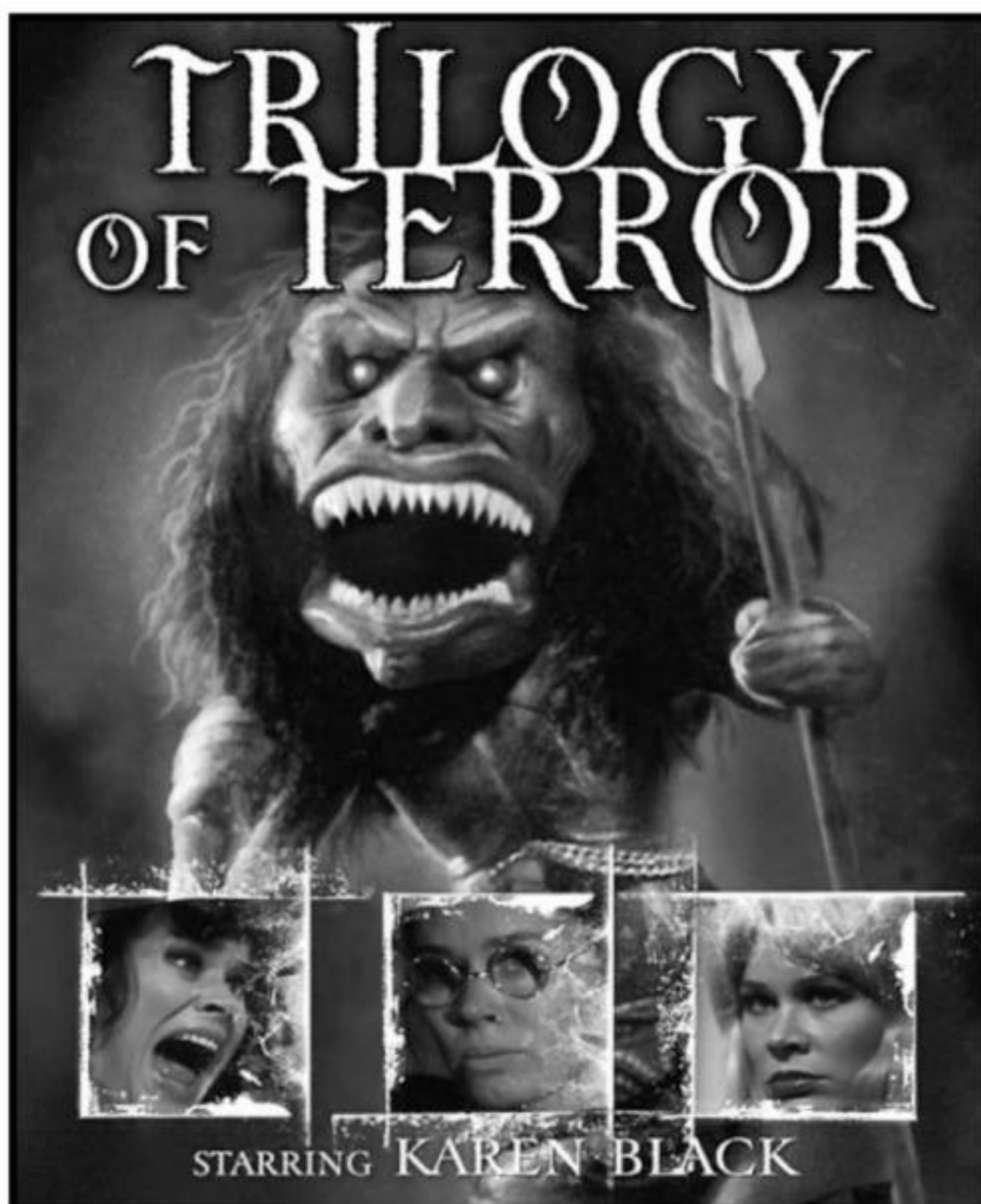
The count of Transylvania lives again. Jack Palance portrays the vampire king in this TV movie of Bram Stoker's horror classic. The actor plays Dracula as a slightly pathetic figure, a victim of twisted fate—but Palance still summons up the evil and terror of the bloodthirsty count, on the loose in Victorian England.

Adding to the chills: a faithful adaptation of Stoker's work by Richard Matheson ("Duel," "Dying Room Only") and fine cinematography, rich in Gothic touches. (2 hrs.)

**Cast**

Dracula	Jack Palance
Van Helsing	Nigel Davenport
Arthur Holmwood	Simon Ward
Lucy Westenra	Fiona Lewis
Mina Murray	Penelope Horner
Jonathan Harker	Murray Brown
Mrs. Westenra	Pamela Brown

In 1975, Matheson and Curtis collaborated (again with Nolan) on *Trilogy of Terror*, an anthology of short horror tales that marks Dan Curtis's greatest achievement in horror. *Trilogy of Terror* is, in effect, a showcase for the third tale in the film, 'Amelia', written by Matheson, based on his short story, *Prey*. In fact, *Prey* was a story that Matheson had tried to bring to the screen several times before, so sure was he of its poten-



cy. 'Amelia' is Curtis's masterpiece, and possibly the best horror 'short' ever made. It is pure Matheson – and pure Curtis. In 'Amelia', a lone woman (the Amelia of the title) is 'locked in a desperate struggle against forces bigger than herself' namely a devil doll with a knife that is terrorising her in her apartment. On one level, Amelia is a classic survival story: the doll is trying to kill Amelia and she must fight back to survive. On another level, 'Amelia', like all the greatest horror stories, is a Freudian nightmare, which perhaps accounts for its continuing capacity to disturb, its once-seen-never-forgotten quality.

'Amelia' opens in typical Curtis fashion, showing Amelia (Karen Black) arriving home at her modern city apartment – as far from gothic as you can





get. However, Curtis's penchant for low camera angles immediately creates a sense of drama and unease within a domestic setting. Amelia, we learn, lives alone in the apartment which she rents from friends. She has recently started a relationship with a man, a teacher, for whom she has bought the Zuni doll as a present. Her new found independence is, however, overshadowed by the guilt she feels towards her emotionally needy mother, with whom she 'always spends Friday night'. In a phone call to her mother she tries to withdraw from this obligation for once in order to spend the evening with her boyfriend on his birthday. (It is also suggested that she has promised to sleep with him for the first time tonight.) The conversation with her mother quickly becomes strained as the mother (whose voice we do not hear, subtly suggesting that there may not actually be anyone on the other end of the line) tries to make Amelia feel guilty, not only for cancelling their usual arrangement, but for seeking independence by moving into the apartment. We glimpse the guilt, resentment and co-dependence in which daughter and mother are mired, which has restricted Amelia's life and is driving her to the breaking point. Her relationship with her overbearing mother is an unseen but malignant force, which, like the Zuni doll, threatens to 'destroy' Amelia.

But is it all in her mind? Matheson's intriguing script, underlined by Curtis's careful direction, opens up the possibility that both the phone call and the doll attack might be figments of Amelia's imagination: symptoms of some kind of mother fixated guilt-induced psychosis. Amelia is, after all, portrayed as a neurotic (Karen Black seemed to be typecast as neurotics following *Trilogy of Terror* and may have been given the role after playing one in *Five Easy Pieces*). "I will not get a headache" she tells herself after the phone call to her mother, "why is it always like this?" Later she exclaims "This can't be happening."

If we accept the possibility of it being 'all in her mind' then we can read the Zuni doll 'attack' as a desire

for punishment brought about by Amelia's guilt, anger and despair.

The main sequences in 'Amelia' amply demonstrate Curtis's skills as a 'psychological' horror director. After Amelia's phone call to her mother, we cut to the apartment at night. There is a distinct mood change towards the gothic, evoked by the low shadow lighting. City sounds create claustrophobia within the apartment. Curtis will, in fact, heighten the sense of claustrophobia throughout the film by trapping Amelia in increasingly confined spaces. Amelia is now on the phone to her boyfriend, the teacher. She has once again buckled under the guilt, and cancels her date with him in order to spend the evening with her mother. Her inability to break out of the cycle of guilt and emotional abuse is, in effect, what dooms Amelia: her ultimate acceptance of the situation with her mother. It is at this moment that the Zuni doll comes to life and strikes. Amelia talks to the doll as if it were *already* alive, when she searches for it under the settee and calls it 'little man.' If the idea is already in Amelia's mind (put there by the scroll which tells her that there is a spirit trapped inside the doll) then we can see how Amelia might become suggestible to the thought of the doll attacking her, as the conflict she feels over her mother conjoins with her thoughts about the doll being 'alive', sending her into psychosis.

Curtis brilliantly constructs the doll attack as a series of flash cuts, we only get the briefest glimpses of the doll, almost as though Amelia herself might be 'animating' it (as of course Karen Black, in acting out the scenes with the doll, would have been). We hardly ever see the doll in its entirety working 'itself'. Instead, Curtis suggests its movements through a series of brief low angle point of view shots, from the doll's perspective, as it rushes forward in attack. At the same time, Curtis emphasises the subjective nature of the scene in the editing and camera positions, which closely align the viewer with Amelia and her vantage point throughout: a technique that Hitchcock described as 'subjective cinema'. Curtis also evokes Amelia's psychosis by exaggerating the perspectives of the apartment with wide angle lenses, distorting the apartment's space and emphasising its 'hiding places' where the doll might be lurking. The apartment itself thus becomes more threatening as Amelia's psychosis grows, and the supernatural appears to impinge on reality.

As Amelia becomes increasingly besieged in the apartment by the doll and forced into smaller and smaller spaces – at first the bedroom, then the bathroom, then the closet – her attempts to smother the doll and destroy it (and thus conquer her neurosis) fail. She can neither fend off the attacks nor hide from them. When she tries to contain the doll in a suitcase it cuts its way out. She





cannot, in other words, repress her neurosis either; she must confront it, and its cause. The nightmare that ensues is, without doubt, what most stays in the mind of viewers long after 'Amelia' is over. In the final confrontation with the doll, Amelia burns it in the oven, but when she opens the oven door to take a look the spirit of the doll 'possesses' her. She cannot destroy the doll (or what it has come to embody), only assimilate it into herself. The repression thus explodes from her – turning into murderous aggression towards her mother. Crouching, animal-like on the kitchen floor, brandishing the kitchen knife, waiting for her mother's arrival, Curtis slowly tracks into Amelia's face to reveal a horrible set of jagged teeth: Amelia has finally been consumed by a 'force' greater than herself, for she has 'become' the Zuni doll and all that it represents.

'Amelia' is quintessential Curtis, a truly great horror film that unquestionably 'finds the terror place inside you and squeezes it with a cold hand'. As a TV movie 'Amelia' stands supreme, as one critic wrote, 'arguably the scariest piece ever crafted for under the made-for-TV label.'

After adapting Robert Marasco's *Burnt Offerings* (1976) for the big screen (with William F. Nolan), Curtis returned to the TV anthology movie in 1977 with *Dead of Night*. Essentially an attempt to recreate the success of *Trilogy of Terror*, *Dead of Night* again featured three stories scripted by Nolan and Matheson, directed by Curtis. Again, the third one is the stand out. 'Bobby' was an original Matheson script in which he and Curtis aimed for the pace and mood of 'Amelia'. 'Bobby' is another Freudian nightmare but one that inverts the basic premise of 'Amelia': this time it is a parent's nightmare rather than a child's. Joan Hackett plays a woman who uses witchcraft to conjure her son back from the dead, after a drowning accident. However, 'Bobby' is no longer the loving son she remembers but a demon hell bent on revenge. Like 'Amelia' who suffers punishment for trying to break free of her mother, Hackett is punished because her negligence led to her son's death. If 'Bobby' does not quite achieve the heady horrors of 'Amelia', it comes pretty close. Once again Curtis's skillful direction incorporates cat and mouse suspense with menacing low camera angles, shadow lighting and tight editing to create elemental terror. The final 'reveal' of Bobby's true demonic self in the very last shot may not have the unforgettable nightmare quality of Karen Black sprouting Zuni doll teeth, but it is still effectively scary.

Curtis returned once again to 'Amelia' and 'Bobby' twenty years later in the part-remake, part-sequel *Trilogy of Terror 2* (1996). By then, however, there was the sense that Curtis was repeating himself, simply going through the motions. 'He Who Kills' takes up the aftermath of 'Amelia' as police arrive at the apartment. Finding both Amelia and her mother dead, they retrieve the remains of the Zuni doll and take it to the local museum where it once again runs on a rampage



terrorising the museum scientist played by Lysette Anthony. 'Bobby' in *Trilogy of Terror 2* is an almost shot-by-shot remake of the 1977 version again featuring Lysette Anthony, this time in the Joan Hackett role. Curtis was clearly coasting on past successes, but by 1996, the horror genre had passed him by. Curtis had been away from it for too long, having left it in 1978

to make the semi-autobiographical romantic drama *When Every Day Was the Fourth of July* followed by the phenomenally successful *The Winds of War* (1983) and *War and Remembrance* (1988). His attempts, afterwards, to revive previous horror successes had started with a reboot of *Dark Shadows* as a series in 1991 and a TV movie in 2005 and ended with a reboot of *The Night Stalker* the same year. Sadly all were unsuccessful. Curtis's brand of horror was of its time, and its time was now past. His particular vision of the gothic belonged to a golden age of the TV movie in the 1970s but seemed anachronistic in the context of modern television drama.

Looking back the work of Dan Curtis now, however, it is clear that his contribution to TV horror is undeniable. *Dark Shadows* and *The Night Stalker* changed the face of TV horror, paving the way for shows like *The X Files*, *The Ghost Whisperer* and countless other supernatural dramas. Dan Curtis's vision for combining reality and supernatural fantasy can be seen as part of a wider movement in the 1970s that departed from the old horror of Hammer, in favor of modern horror. Curtis thus stands alongside other important contemporary directors of the period – Roman Polanski, George A. Romero, Wes Craven – in spearheading the modern horror film of the 1960s and 1970s. The quality of his work, and its popularity, became the benchmark for the made-for-TV horror movie and inspired dozens of other TV horror movies in the early 1970s; Steven Spielberg's *Something Evil* (1972), Wes Craven's *Stranger in our House* (1978), Tobe Hooper's *Salem's Lot* (1979), and other TV movie classics like *Killdozer* (1974), *Satan's Triangle* (1975) and *Don't Be Afraid of the Dark* (1973) all owe something to the work of producer-director Dan Curtis.

As a film-maker able to find the fear place in all of us and squeeze it with a cold hand, Dan Curtis stands supreme.





# LUCKY

# 13



# AN

# INTERVIEW

# WITH

# RONALD MALFI

By Dustin LaValley

The gothic horror novel *The Fall of Never* was released in 2004 by Raw Dog Screaming Press. It quickly became a widely praised favorite of readers and critics alike. Ronald Malfi had begun what would come to be a diverse and successful career penning novels that exceeded expectations, garnering readers from all genres and collecting rave reviews, nominations and awards. Since the debut novel eight years ago, over fifteen others have been written and released by esteemed publishers and there is plenty more on the way with no signs of letting up. With a voice that utilizes subtle, moody, psychological character driven stories, his words comprise more horror than those who prey on shock and absurdity. The ability to traverse between gritty crime thrillers and supernatural horror adds to the acknowledgement that Ronald Malfi is a master storyteller. He is, as his readers know, the next king of intelligent, provoking horror.

The author allowed me to pick his brain on some favorite books and gave insights on his writing. Read on for an entertaining and insightful interview with a man who is no doubt carving his own niche in the genre.

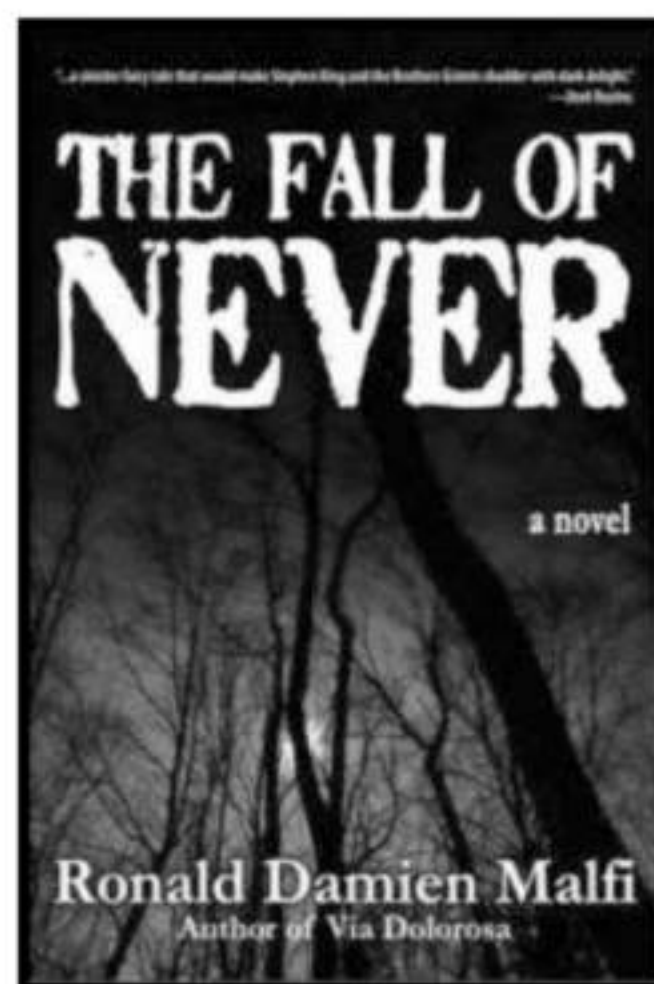
**Dustin LaValley:** What was it that drew you to the horror/dark fiction genres?

**Ronald Malfi:** I've always been fascinated by the darker side of things. Even my few attempts at writing mainstream fiction had, if not outright horror elements, at least some disturbing sensibilities about them. I think a writer's job is to wonder "what if?" and quite often – for me, anyway – that "what if?" tends to lead me down

dark paths.

**DL:** Where and when did the author inside Ronald Malfi step out and say it was time to start taking writing beyond a childhood fancy to a serious vocation?

**RM:** I'm sure I'm no different than other authors when I say I started writing at a very young age. I had an old manual typewriter when I was a kid – I was around nine or ten or so –



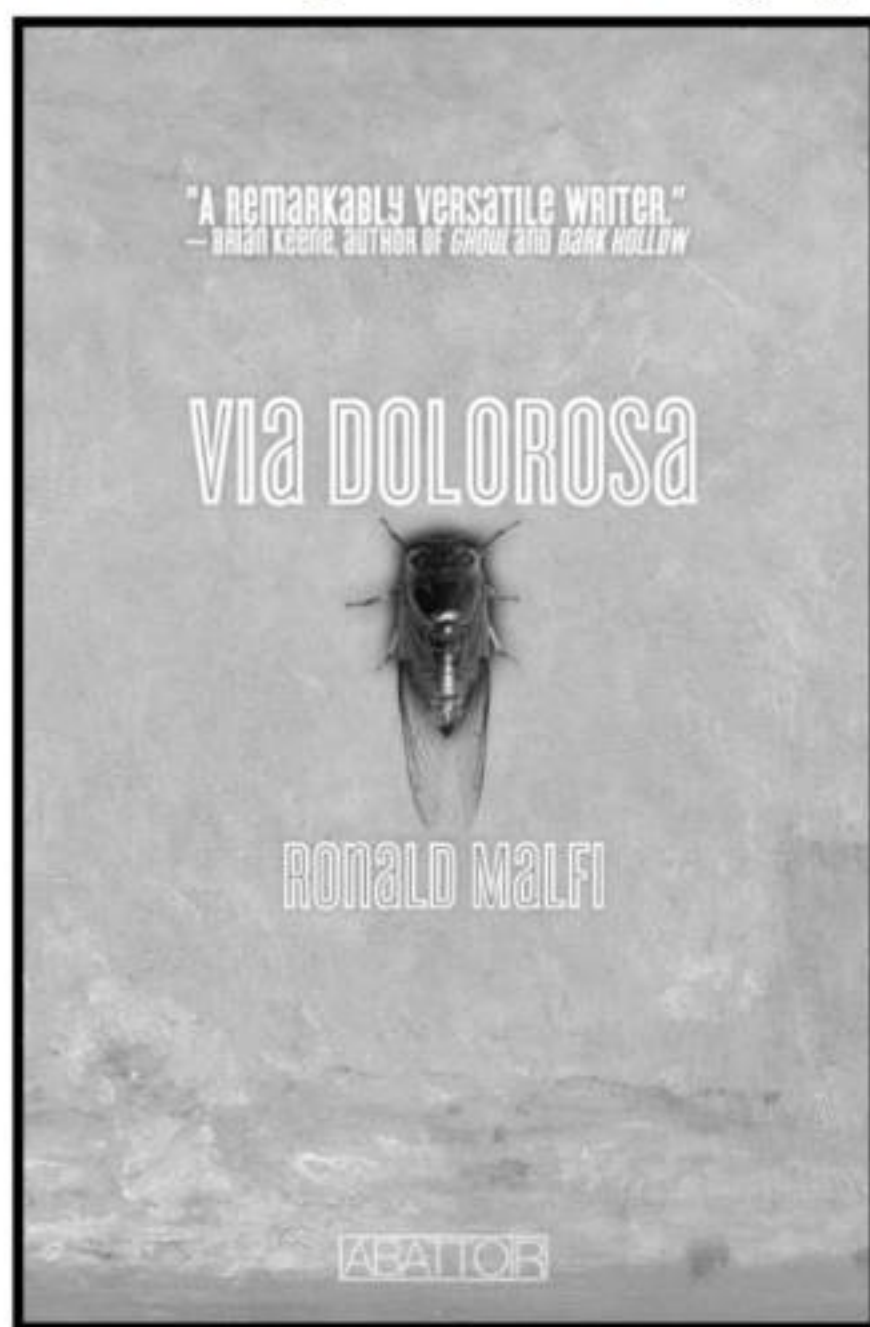
and I would type short stories on it every day after school. By the time I was in college and had a few short stories published in small collegiate or online magazines, which were a new thing at the time, I had amassed a steamer trunk full of short stories and a few novel manuscripts. As my senior year drew to a close, I wanted to really test the viability of publishing a novel, no doubt with the hopes that I could postpone getting a "real" job for a while. My first novel was published a year after I graduated college, which afforded me another year or so to write fulltime. Despite the amateurish nature of that first novel and the subsequent disappointment I had with my publisher, I still loved writing and knew it was something I would continue to pursue.

**DL:** You're also known for work outside of the horror genres. Having successfully crossed into mystery and mainstream fiction, do you have a preference in which



genre(s) to work in?

**RM:** I love all types of fiction, with Ernest Hemingway being my favorite author. I think *The Sun Also Rises* is probably the greatest American novel ever written. I wrote a couple of novels – *The Nature of Monsters* and *Via Dolorosa* – that were heavily influenced by my understanding of what Hemingway was trying to do.



Despite the fact that these books were perceived as mainstream, they were both fairly dark. *Via Dolorosa* specifically is quite bleak and moody. I guess I can't keep away from the genre completely.

**DL:** The dark suspense within *The Fall of Never* took readers by surprise as they discovered a new name that could be placed

alongside that of quiet horror's best, Charles L. Grant. This arrival, released from Raw Dog Screaming Press in 2004 with illustrations by accomplished artist and brother Darin, garnered praise from readers and critics. Other than *Floating Staircase*, many have called this your best work. Would you agree?

**RM:** I don't know if I'd consider it my best work, though it does seem to be a fan favorite. *The Fall of Never* certainly set the stage for the type of "quiet" or "atmospheric" horror many of my fans have begun to expect from me. None of that was intentional at the time. I wrote it in an effort to combine a modern gothic tale with fairytale elements – something that would appear both unique yet familiar to readers. The manuscript was written around the same time I was writing the first draft of *Shamrock Alley*, a very different – and very gritty – novel, and the juxtaposition of going back and forth between both novels I think helped keep them both firmly rooted in their individual genres. I could be fanciful with *The Fall of Never* then move over to *Shamrock Alley* already prepared to be as brutal and gritty as that story required of me. It was a pretty intense and



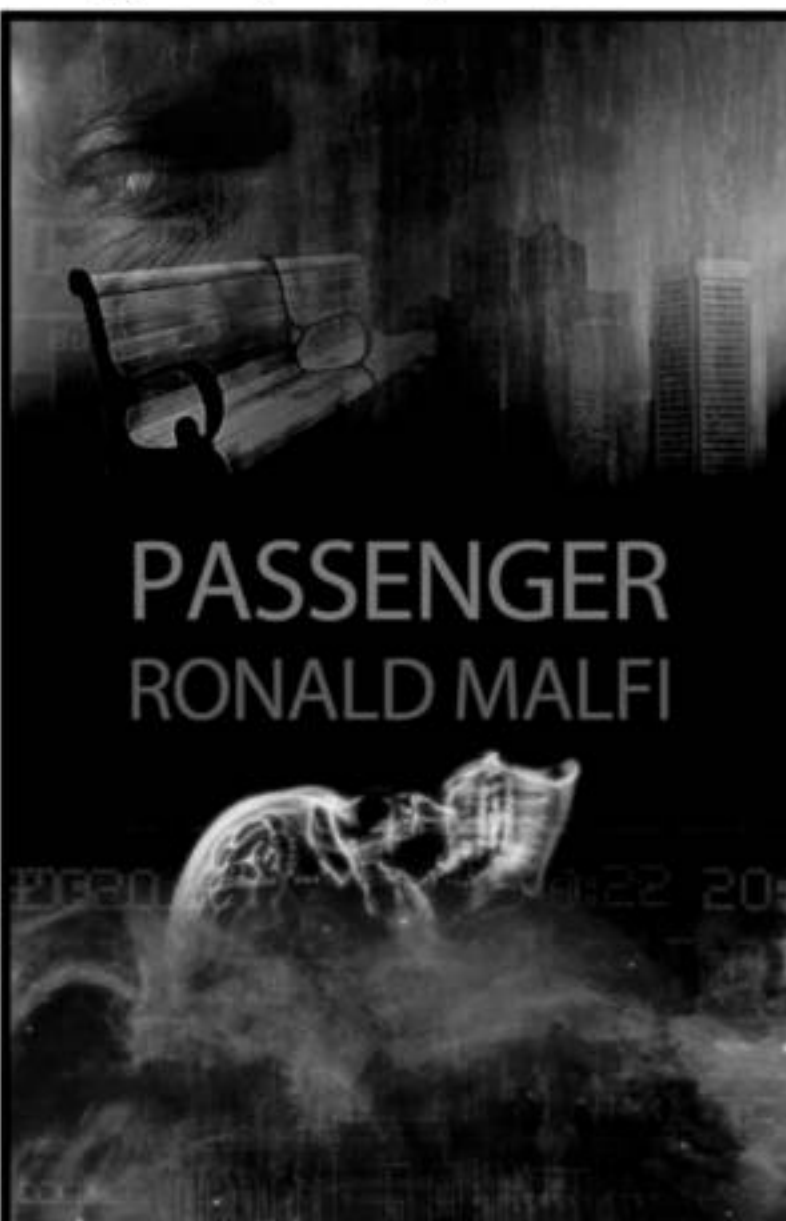
satisfying process, writing them both simultaneously like that. Most people don't realize the first drafts of those novels were written together like that, since *Fall* was originally published in 2004 and *Shamrock* didn't come out till 2009, but that's how it went. Next year, Samhain Publishing will be re-releasing the paperback and ebook editions of *The Fall of Never*, and I'm very excited about it.

**DL:** Other than having met with extremely good reviews, the supernatural novel *Floating Staircase* is a 2011 Stoker Award finalist. Did you ever imagine this ghost story to be doing so well while typing up the pages?

**RM:** I've always felt *Floating Staircase* was one of my strongest novels. Of course, you can never guess how they will be accepted by the public or what awards or nominations, if any, they might receive. I knew it was a very personal story and I was pleased with the final product, so I had high hopes that readers would respond to it accordingly. The Stoker nomination was very nice, and I was happy to receive such positive emails and various other responses from readers as well as HWA voting members. Following the Stoker nod, it won a Gold Independent Publisher Book (IPPY) Award for best horror novel of 2011, and that was very satisfying. Awards are nice but it's the positive responses from readers that is the real treasure.

**DL:** In my opinion one of your best is the Delirium Books release, *Passenger*. The story centers on a man who must unravel his past after waking up on a Baltimore bus with no memory including his own identity. The horror within does not depend on metaphysical elements or even bloody acts, but of psychological trauma. Where did this story come from? Is there any particular instance in your own past that outlined what would become *Passenger*?

**RM:** Like *Staircase*, *Passenger* is also a very personal story, and probably tied with *Staircase* for my personal



favorite of all my books. As I recall, the idea more or less just appeared in my head – a man with no identity trying to discover who he is and why he can't remember – and I thought it would be an easy enough book to write. I didn't think it would be very long, and it would afford me the opportunity to explore Baltimore, a city I know very well, and all its hidden pockets. But



I quickly found that this novel was one of the most difficult to write. I hadn't realized just how much a character's past and personal history play in how they talk, act, behave, and why they're motivated to do the things they do. Once you take away that past, that history, you very quickly realized you've got an empty shell of a human being who needs to be brought to life. It was quite daunting. I relied a lot on the city of Baltimore itself as a sort of pseudo-character, which the protagonist reflects in his personality to some degree. Also, some readers have been attentive enough to notice that some of the plot and characters are parodied from Homer's *The Odyssey*.

**DL:** Another release from DB is the novella *The Separation*. A quirky title with what could be a double meaning: the separation of husband from wife and also, the separation of man from mind and something even more perplexing. Dealing more so with gentle, mind-bending horror with a hint of the unknown, this short yet intriguing book places the reader between our judgment of what is and is not real and wondering if what we are "observing" is truly reality. Can you give us some background or insight, shine some light on what we may all have in our heads but unsure of the answer? Maybe this is exactly, as I suspect, what you wanted the readers to question and confirm for themselves?

**RM:** I am fascinated by "personal" horror – horror that is borne in you and from which you cannot escape. The conceit for *The Separation* was to manifest one man's misalignment with the world around him as a physical and tangible ailment. You hear stories of people who undergo severe mental stress and how their minds can sometimes separate and float off in some fashion of self-preservation – find a dark and quiet corner in the ether and just wait there until things are better. I wanted to take that concept to another level, a more tangible one. Like *Passenger*, my previous Delirium Books release, this was a very quiet and atmospheric tale, and I think it surprised some of Delirium's more avid followers in its deviation from the usual genre fare.

**DL:** *Snow*, a tight, fast-paced horror story of travelers stuck in a rural town during a snowstorm who must fight off an evil that can turn people into berserk killers was released by Leisure Books. This is perhaps your most mainstream horror novel, dealing with what could be a form of, as we know them, zombies. (Although forgoing the usual route and giving readers a fresh taste on the topic, which was and is greatly needed.) Did you have any trouble with writing what can be seen as the "black sheep" of your bibliography?

**RM:** Ha ha, black sheep – I like that! *Snow* is exactly

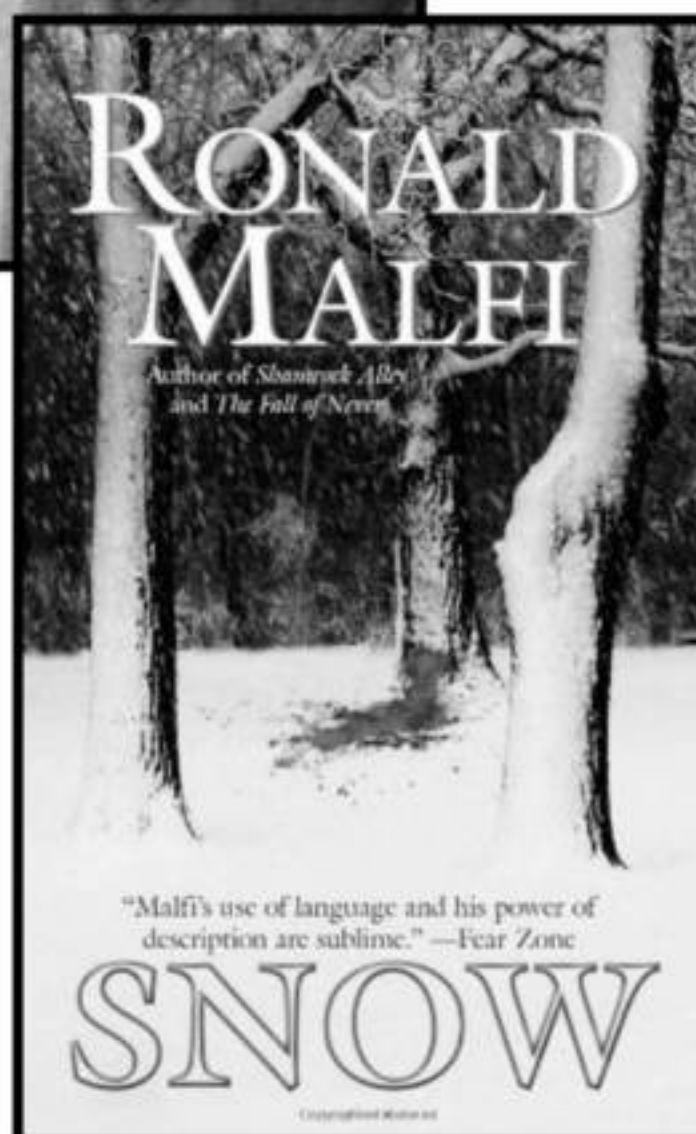
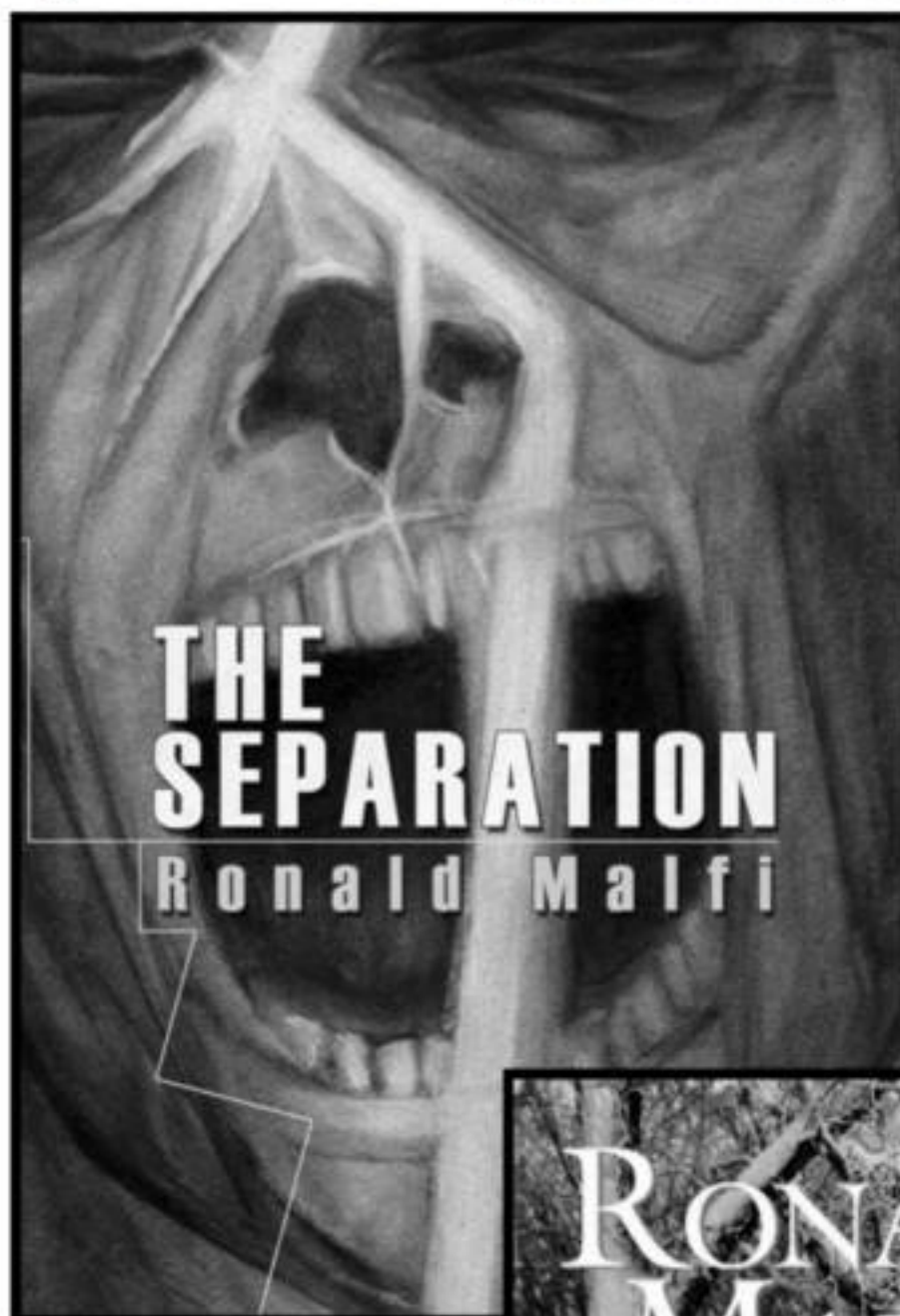
what I set out for it to be, which was the type of book Leisure was putting out at the time – visceral, fast-paced, engaging, fun. There is no deeper meaning to the novel – as Stephen King says, sometimes a story is just a story – and I had a lot of fun writing it. I suppose the comparison to zombies is unavoidable, though I had no concept of that while writing it. Perhaps if the zombie craze wasn't at such a hypersensitive velocity at the time the book was released, people wouldn't have made the comparison. I certainly didn't *intend* to write a zombie novel and, for the most part, I don't think I have. As long as people enjoy it, I don't really care what label they want to put on it.

**DL:** *Cradle Lake* is simply an amazing read that once again places your trademark human horror with that of folklore. Taking the readers through a story of fantastical Native American legend and the all-too-real sufferings of a young couple as they try and deal with their own inner turmoil with glimpses of hope, the book ends with a delightful, abrupt moment of splendid morbidity. Can you relate any of the characters and the events to life occurrences or observations that may have influenced *Cradle Lake*?

**RM:** *Cradle Lake* stems from the same place as *Floating Staircase*. In fact, much of *Cradle Lake* had appeared in a very early draft of *Staircase*, mostly surrounding the couple's miscarriages. My wife and I were lucky never to have had any problems in the baby-making department, though much of the final version of *Cradle Lake* was written while my wife and I were discussing having children and when my wife had become pregnant. I was uncharacteristically petrified at the thought of becoming a father, and my

mind starting going over various horrible scenarios, some of which I incorporated into the novel. It is a very bleak story and a very human one. The hardcover collectible edition was released in 2011 from Delirium Books, with Leisure slated to do the mass market paperback as part of a three-book deal (*Floating Staircase* would have been the other book), but then the fecal matter hit those whirring blades at Leisure and the bottom

dropped out. Medallion Press, my trade publisher, swooped in and snatched up *Cradle Lake*. It will finally be available in paperback and ebook in June of





next year.

**DL:** *The Nature of Monsters* and *Via Dolorosa* both bring aspects of horror through the lives of young couples and their troubles and tribulations. Nothing supernatural or bloody, no straight forward horror or gore, these two books rely on your grand ability to guide the reader with atmosphere, mood and character relation/character manipulation. This I find is the greatest of all your traits as an author, a true storyteller. How did this style of yours develop? Was it always there in your early works or was it a conscious effort to create?

**RM:** As I touched on earlier, these two novels were written at a time where I was exploring different authors, and fell in love with Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Gertrude Stein, and that whole ex-pat tableau. I became fascinated by the notion that the relationships between characters are not only vital in telling a good story, but could perhaps tell the *whole* story. I'm one of those authors who find importance in character over plot every time, and I really wanted to explore that with *Monsters* and *Via*.

**DL:** The Independent Publisher Book Award winning *Shamrock Alley* is based on the true events of a Secret Service agent in the 1970s that infiltrated and took down the dangerous Irish organized crime ring known as The Westies within Hell's Kitchen of New York City. This gripping crime novel is not only an insider look at the notorious gang and the man who brought them to justice, but is also based on someone close to you. With an option for television and having been brought to the big screen (not in relation to the *Shamrock Alley* manuscript) starring Sean Penn in *State of Grace* in the early 90s, the story is one of great curiosity. Can you give us some details behind the events that led to the creation of this novel, the events (that you can share) that involved your father and family?

**RM:** In the late '70s, my father became a Secret Service agent and worked out of the New York Field Office. Just a few years on the job, he picked up a counterfeit case that led him to a group of Irish thugs who were maybe just a bit older than he was. He went undercover to flush out the counterfeit but soon realized the gang was involved in much more than phony money – by some estimations, they were responsible for half of the unsolved homicides in Manhattan at the time. And these guys weren't just bumping people off and dumping their bodies in the Hudson River – they were brutal and ruthless, and would often cut off the hands of their victims to leave misleading fingerprints at crime scenes. They were so brutal, even the Mafia stayed away from them, and witnesses refused to testify against them. By the time my dad learned all this, he was already too deep undercover. *Shamrock Alley* is a novelization of that investigation, and while I'm quite proud of the book, it pales in comparison to hearing my dad tell his personal stories of working that case – stories he relayed to me often during the writing of the novel. We had briefly considered writing it as nonfiction, but there had already been some nonfiction books published on the case –

T.J. English's brilliant bestseller *The Westies* springs immediately to mind – and, anyway, I was more comfortable in the realm of fiction. The process of writing the novel was very different than it had been with my other books. I typically don't outline, aside from jotting some specific notes or plot-points in a notebook, but it was necessary with this novel, since my father was working alongside me. We would go over the case, he would tell me stories of how the beats played out in the investigation, and I would write a few chapters at a time, give them to him for his review, and we kept going from there. The book was released in 2009, garnered a few Hollywood options, and was received quite well critically. Curiously enough, many of my peers in the horror genre are most impressed by this non-horror book. I think this is because they're happy to see versatility in their peers. The publishing industry is not supportive of writers who like to bounce around in different genres, which is unfortunate. I like the freedom of being able to write what I want to at any given time.

**DL:** Your short fiction, which is scattered through anthologies and magazines, is just as well produced as your longer works. Is there chance of a collection of short stories in the future?

**RM:** This is perhaps one of the most frequently asked questions – will I ever release a collection of my short stories? I really don't know. I think a collection needs to be cohesive, with a similar feel or theme running through all the stories – or, if not necessarily a theme, then at least a *feel*, a *flavor*. My short fiction is a bit all over the place, and I never quite felt like they would all mesh well in a single collection. Moreover, I find it difficult to write good short fiction – it's a different skill than writing novels – and I constantly second guess the quality of my shorter stories. But who knows? Perhaps in the future...

**DL:** What's next? What forthcoming work can we readers look forward to? Where can we learn more about your work and keep track of your signings and future endeavors?

**RM:** The two biggest things are the paperback and ebook release of my novel *The Narrows*, which will be out from Samhain Publishing in September. This is another old-school horror novel, with the quiet sensibilities of *The Fall of Never* though with the monstrous elements most present in *Snow*. I've teamed up again with editor Don D'Auria (the editor on *Snow*) and we're both really pleased with how the novel turned out. The other big thing is that I have been penning original novellas for Delirium Books's novella line, which has been so much fun, and the books themselves are gorgeous. Delirium has lined up some fantastic authors for their novella line, and I would urge any fan of horror fiction to check them out. As for keeping up with me and my work, my website is [www.ronmalfi.com](http://www.ronmalfi.com), which is occasionally if not religiously updated. I've also got the requisite Facebook and Twitter pages, so feel free to look me up.



# BY THE NUMBERS



4

Number of "figure" pieces included in Hasbro's 1963 Frankenstein Mystery Game.



50

Dollars to purchase *Resident Evil* for the Sony PlayStation in 1996.

99

Minute runtime for the uncut version of *Enter the Ninja* (1981).

147

Episodes produced of *The Real Ghostbusters*.



209

Pages in the first 1896 edition of H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*.



1970

Year that *House of Dark Shadows* was released in theaters.



Reviews of the Best (And Worst) in Horror, Sci-Fi & Fantasy!

# BEYOND FANTASTIQUE!

[bee-ond: outside the understanding, limits, or reach of; past: beyond comprehension.]

[fan-tas-teek: a French term for a cinematic or literary genre encompassing horror, science fiction and fantasy.]

## CINEMA:

### PROMETHEUS

20th Century Fox; 2012, Running Time: 124 Min., Dir: Ridley Scott, Writers: Damon Lindelof, Jon Spaihts; Cast: Noomi Rapace, Logan Marshall-Green, Michael Fassbender.



### COLOSSAL MESS OR EPIC SUCCESS?

From the moment the teaser trailer for Ridley Scott's proposed "prequel" to the *Alien* franchise hit the web, it was near impossible to keep expectations at a reasonable level for *Prometheus*. Not only was Scott returning to science fiction after three decades, but also returning to the universe where he first captured the hearts and minds of legions of fans. The mythos of the *Alien* universe may not be as popular or recognized as *Star Wars* or even *The Matrix*, but it is every bit as prolific. There have been numerous spin offs in video games, comics, and even crossovers with other

Noomi Rapace discovers that all is not as it seems aboard the *Prometheus*.



franchises like *Predator*. For many fans, *Prometheus* was to be \*the\* event of the summer. I'd consider myself part of that camp.

We'd been assured two things about *Prometheus*: One is that it would "share DNA" with the *Alien* series, but still retain its own identity and ability to breath on its own. Two, that it would be a mind-blowing journey into religion, science, genetics, robots, and otherworldly monsters. Promising both depth and spectacle, *Prometheus* was sure to be the antidote to dumbed down popcorn movies littering the theaters this time of year. A film in search of the architect(s) of the universe – fueled by one of the giants in the genre – should be a game-changer, right?

What I found is a film with cool space vehicles, an intriguing premise, and sumptuous visuals that flirted with profundity, but was also occasionally dumb and overblown. I'd consider it a success, but one marred by trying to shoehorn its *Alien* brethren into the formula. General complaints from reviewers and filmgoers seem to point to "unanswered questions" as being the main culprit in holding the film back. What I found was a film that was surprisingly straightforward. I would agree that the film had much loftier goals than say *Battleship*, but that *Prometheus*, for me, runs the risk of being forgotten by the end of the week.

I don't want to recap the entire synopsis of *Prometheus*. For posterity, it's the story of the crew – a collection of archeologists, geologists, linguists, and other scientists – of the *Prometheus*, a space exploration vessel funded by the mega-rich and powerful Peter Weyland (Guy Pierce) of Weyland Industries. The ship is on a course charted by a "star map" uncovered by a pair of archeologists, Elizabeth Shaw (Noomi Rapace) and Charles Holloway (Logan Marshall-Green). Their hope is that the coordinates will lead them to our makers, a race of super-beings referred to as "Engineers". As Elizabeth states, "it's not a map, it's an invitation."

The crew, led by the fiercely corporate Meredith Vickers (Charlize Theron), explores an ancient structure that houses multitudes of canisters, as well as the dead remains of the Engineers. Upon finding the supposed creators dead, the group is more than a





**Not bad for a human:  
David, an android played by Michael  
Fassbender, may hold the fate of  
humanity in his hands.**

little discouraged. When David, the android caretaker and translator of the mission, sneaks a canister aboard the *Prometheus*, he sets off a chain of events that will touch upon interstellar evolution, existentialism, religion, and genocide. In this, *Prometheus* is daring to go places other films only dream.

The cast is competent with Michael Fassbender and Charlize Theron holding down the fort in their respective roles. Fassbender is no doubt the conversation piece of the film. His performance is riveting despite an overall feeling of being underdeveloped. Rapace channels pathos where events get a little ridiculous, such as a tense scene in an automated surgery bed. She honestly kept me from rolling my eyes where a less capable actor would have failed. She made it work. I was hoping Theron's character wouldn't have been so predictably cold, but the archetype did add an element of "is she or isn't she an android" into the mix. Although a lot of her actions belie any notion of prior programming, the question still looms.

Ultimately, *Prometheus* is just about everything it was supposed to be except for mind-blowing. Where the trailer literally gave me goosebumps, I did not feel the same during any moment of the full film. Even though *Alien* was made over 30 years ago, there was a true sense of awe and other worldliness I felt from the moment the *Nostromo* touched down on the Alien planet. Maybe I'm just jaded by years and years of other CGI "epic" fantasy and sci-fi films. *Prometheus* is more pure science fiction than its predecessors. However, it may have been those eerie, scary, claustrophobic moments I was missing all along. There's an anti-climactic feeling by the end that speaks more of the by-

the-numbers action-packed cliffhanger ending than any of hanging philosophical questions.

By no means am I suggesting you avoid the film. I'd just turn the expectation meter down a few notches. It's a case of ambition superceded by compromise. I'll still take this kind of film over *Transformers* or *Battleship* any day.

Reviewed by Chris Hallock  
More of Chris' writing can be found at  
[www.AllThingsHorrorOnline.net](http://www.AllThingsHorrorOnline.net)

### **THE STUFF**

*New World Pictures; 1985, Running Time: 93 Min., Dir: Larry Cohen, Writer: Larry Cohen; Cast: Michael Moriarty, Andrea Marcovicci, Garrett Morris.*

### **GOOD STUFF?**

As much as I love horror films, they do tend to use the same type of killer for most of them. More often than not, it's a masked killer that may or may not have risen from the grave to murder you for, well, everything and anything. I'm not saying that the genre is getting stale; it's just that I appreciate it more when something comes along to mix things up a bit. That's one of the many reasons I love *The Stuff*.

*The Stuff* is a 1985 comedic horror film from genre master Larry Cohen. The thing that sets *The Stuff* apart from other horror films is that the killer is actually a sort of living pudding. Saying something like this first brings to mind classics like *The Blob*, but *The Stuff* is actually quite different. While *The Blob* was an organism that would absorb any fleshy thing it touched, *The Stuff*



Michael  
MORIARTY

Paul  
SORVINO

Danny  
AIELLO

Garrett  
MORRIS

A LARRY COHEN FILM

# THE STUFF



ARE YOU EATING IT...OR IS IT EATING YOU?



motive. I must also note that Chocolate Chip Charlie is one of the greatest character names in the history of cinema.

There were times when *The Stuff* was seen outside of a human host, and the special effects were handled quite well. It's easy to say that the effects were "good for the time," but I think they still look good now. With a mixture of forced perspective, reversed footage, and other trickery, they managed to make *The Stuff* look alive in a time long before computer effects.

The movie might seem like a simple horror film on the surface, but if you look into it, there is a good bit of social commentary. It attacks mass consumerism and how the general public is often too blind to see just how terrible something is simply because it is the new, popular fad. It showcases how corporate greed will feed the public anything, even something that is harmful, in order to make a profit. Not something you would expect to find in a movie that appears to be about killer pudding.

The movie is fairly tame for a horror film in the gore department. Probably the most gruesome scenes are when *The Stuff* exits its human hosts in search of fresh bodies. It usually sprays out of the victim's mouth and, I would assume, from the other end, but we are never shown if that is the case. However, given how Cohen likes to skirt the line of humor and horror, I wonder if such a scene was planned and then scrapped due to budget concerns or good taste.

Cohen's directing really shines in this movie, and while most people call *It's Alive* his best movie, *The Stuff* is my favorite of his catalog. The film hits all the right beats, it's never dull, and it has enough dark humor to make even the most cynical person chuckle. It pokes fun at rampant consumerism and brand loyalty in a way that isn't exactly subtle but at the same time doesn't beat you over the head with it. My only complaint is that I would have liked to have seen more of Mo Rutherford. He was such an interesting character, they could have just made a movie about his back story and it would have been good. These days, with so many movies where you forget about main characters the minute the movie ends, it's refreshing to see a film with a lead as memorable as this.

The movie is easy to find on DVD and has a very informative commentary track by director Larry Cohen. He offers plenty of insight into the production and does a great breakdown of many of the complicated shots. The picture quality is good, but unfortunately, the sound is mono only and occasionally drops out, most likely due to a bad source for the transfer. With the

is a living organism that would eat you from the inside out. It's a highly addictive substance that once you eat some, it takes over your brain and makes you eat more. Once your body is full of *The Stuff*, it reproduces and finally expels itself from your now empty husk of a body. Pretty gruesome, huh? Not actually; *The Stuff* is played more for laughs than horror.

The main focus of the movie revolves around the story of David 'Mo' Rutherford, played by veteran actor Michael Moriarty. He's an industrial spy that's been hired by various ice cream and junk food companies to try and find out what, exactly, is *The Stuff*. Ever since *The Stuff* hit the market, every other junk food has taken a massive financial hit. The companies hope Rutherford can expose the makers of *The Stuff* and put them out of business.

The movie also focuses on Jason, the youngest member of an average suburban household. He is the only one in his family who can see that there is something wrong with *The Stuff* and is trying in vain to save his family, who have already been taken over by the seductive gloop. Through a bit of plot convenience, he runs into Rutherford, who rescues him from some of the "Stuffies," zombie-like humans who have been completely taken over by the substance. This brings to mind another horror classic, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

An added layer of comedic relief comes in the form of angry cookie mogul Chocolate Chip Charlie, played by Saturday Night Live alumnus Garrett Morris. While he initially is trying to help Rutherford to expose *The Stuff* and help him get his company back on its feet, it becomes clear later on that he has a sinister ulterior



somewhat obscurity of the film, I am overjoyed that it was treated to a DVD transfer at all. So many good movies will be lost to bad VHS transfers due to their film negatives being lost to years of deterioration from neglect.

If you are burned out by the overwhelming wave of mediocre PG-13 horror that is currently monopolizing the multiplexes and are looking for something different, you should check out *The Stuff*.

Reviewed by Cecil Trachenburg  
Check out [www.GoodBadFlicks.com](http://www.GoodBadFlicks.com) for Cecil's video reviews with new episodes premiering Sunday nights.

## TINTORERA

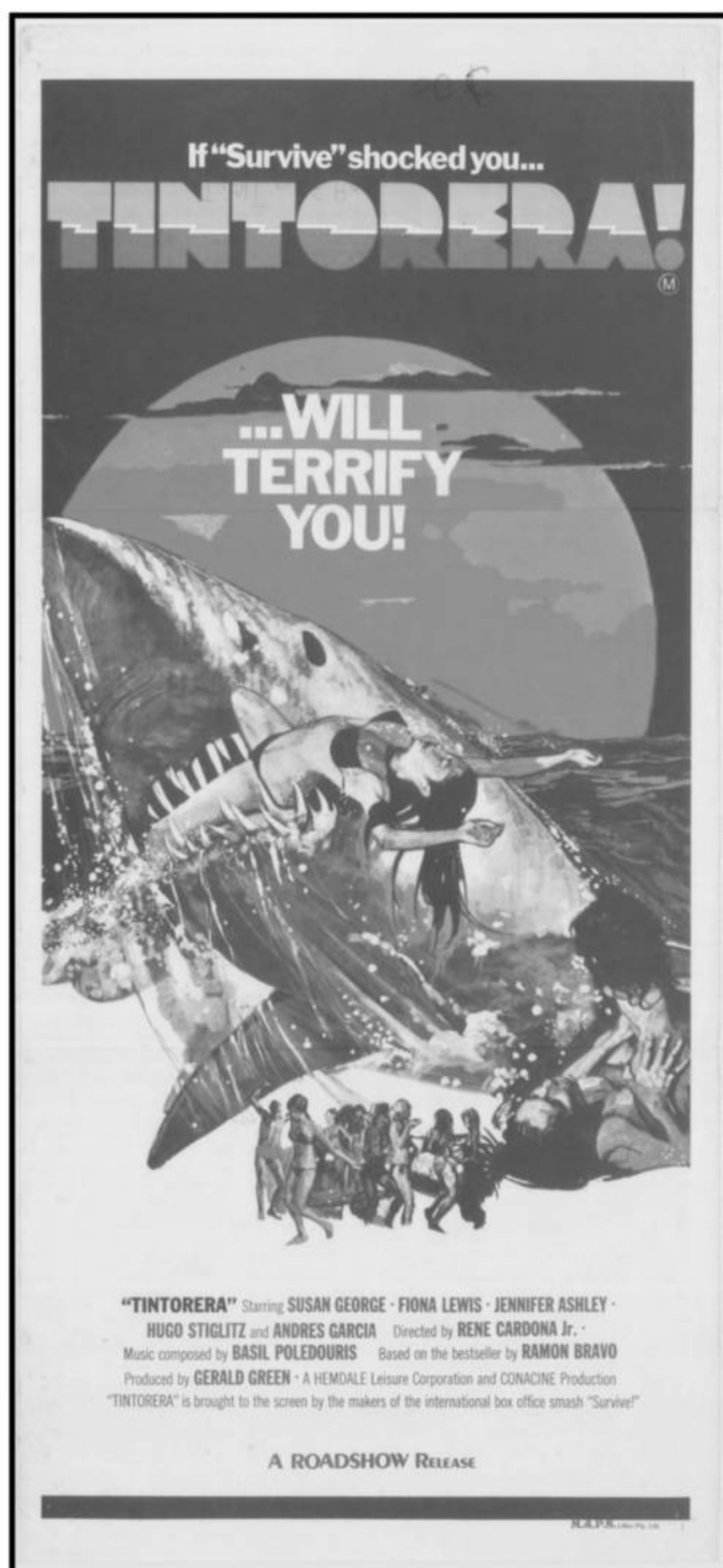
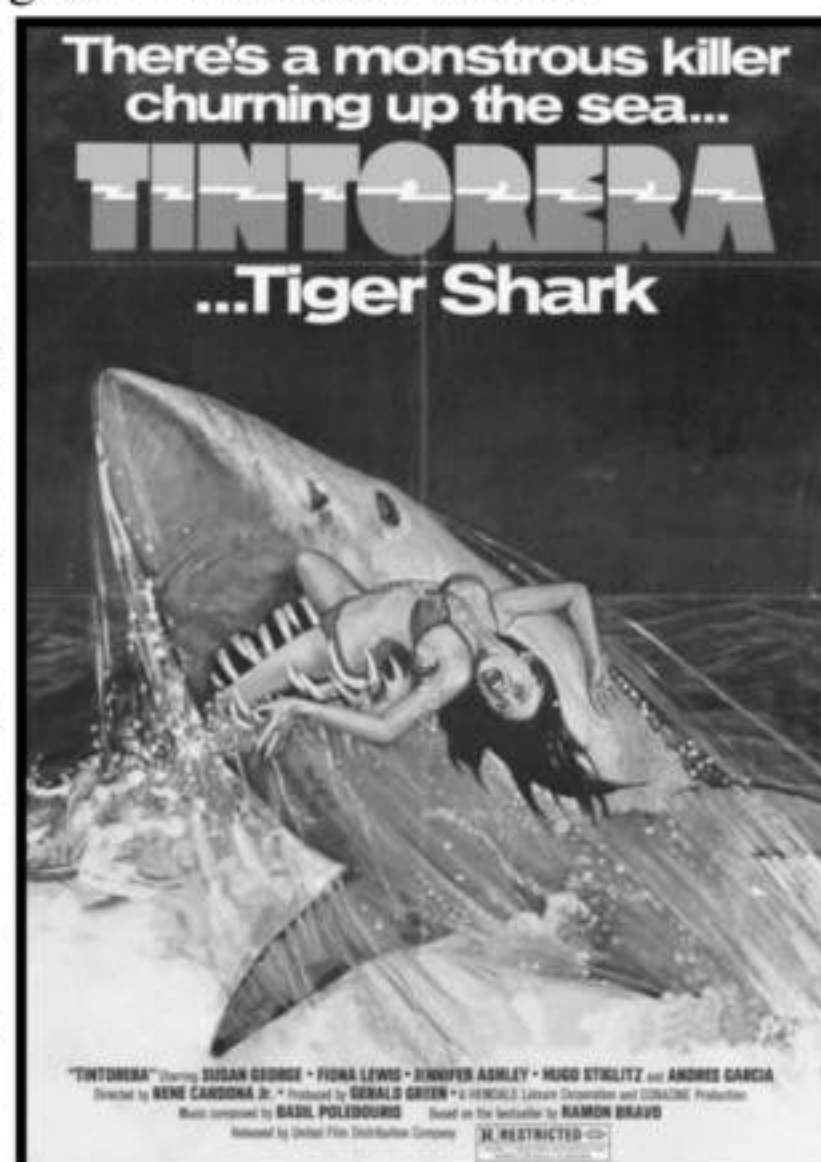
United Film Distribution Company; 1977, Running Time: 85 Min. (U.S. Version), Dir: René Cardona Jr., Writer: René Cardona Jr.; Cast: Hugo Stiglitz, Andrés García, Susan George.

### BEWARE OF THE OCCASIONAL SHARK

Summer is here! Ah, the warm sunny weather, festive barbeques, beautiful sunsets, sandy beaches, and...killer sharks?! Yes, it's that time of year when unwary swimmers stay out of the water near Amity Island for fear of great white man-eating sharks. Back in 1975 Steven Spielberg's *Jaws* set a new precedent for these underwater killing machines and gave audiences second thoughts about taking a dip into oceans everywhere. But, in a grander scheme, that wasn't all it accomplished – *Jaws* created a sizeable tsunami of celluloid rip-offs, a trend that still continues to this day, nearly four decades later. Some of these derivatives have been entertaining like *Mako: The Jaws of Death* (1976), *Orca: The Killer Whale* (1977) and *The Last Shark* (1981), while others like *Barracuda* (1978) and *Devilfish* (1984) are less than stellar (not counting the innumerable SyFy disasterpieces), and then there's *Tintorera: Killer Shark*, the most peculiar of them all...

What makes *Tintorera* such an oddity is that it's a rampaging shark movie with barely any shark. For most of the movie's running time we follow Steven

(Hugo Stiglitz), a vacationing businessman who takes his yacht to a Mexican fishing resort. It's there that he meets a bevy of interesting characters, including no shortage of attractive females – many of whom he develops brief amorous relationships with. Steven also finds an unlikely friend in local swimming instructor, Miguel (Andrés García), a



carefree fun-loving type who's quite a hit with the ladies. Together the two confidants scout out the female tourists, wine-and-dine them on Steven's yacht and spend a-many sleepless nights with their constantly alternating string of 'conquests'. Eventually they meet Gabriella (Susan George), a charming tourist, and begin a passionate three-way relationship.

Does this sound like a story about a killer shark? Keep in mind that the movie poster depicts a shark feasting on a young buxom female under bold text, "There's a monstrous killer churning up the sea... TINTORERA...tiger shark!" Clearly, this was sold as a *Jaws*-clone, but it's not what viewers get – at least not for the most part anyway.





The ad copy isn't completely off the mark, indeed there *is* a vicious tiger shark that chomps down on human flesh, but these sequences are rare. The tiger shark in question essentially becomes little more than a background player to the ongoing 'love story' or, more aptly put, 'love stories'. Steven and Miguel spend their afternoons shark hunting (if there's a reason why these two men senselessly hunt down and butcher said sharks, it has escaped this humble reviewer) which, apparently, is a pastime for tourists. It's peculiar that Steven is partaking in the activity considering, earlier in the film, he mentioned that he 'felt bad for the sharks' as a fisherman was killing one (though seconds later Steven shrugs, remarking "that's life.")

The horror elements surface as little as the elusive title shark, but when they do, they pack one hell of a punch! Some of the shark attacks are exceptionally brutal, and keep in mind this was released in 1977. The shock factor is ratcheted up a few notches simply because nothing of any real consequence happens for so long that when a tragic, gruesome shark attack *does* occur it makes you stand up and take notice. Anytime a shark snacks on humans in a film some comparison to *Jaws* can be made and *Tintorera* isn't much different; the very opening scene is reminiscent of the title credits of *Jaws*, complete with ominous music and murky underwater photography. One major difference regarding the bloodthirsty shark in *Tintorera* that's missing from all other shark movies is the creature's emphatic breathing – *Tintorera* can easily be dubbed the Darth Vader of sharks. An odd sidenote is that the score to *Tintorera* was composed by none other than Basil Poledouris, who would later go on to apply his musical touch to *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), *Red Dawn* (1984), and *Robocop* (1987).

Considering the miniscule budget that *Tintorera* must have had, the underwater camera work is competent, not too dark, and better than others in the 'monster shark' subgenre. The acting isn't terrible, but no one will win any accolades here either. *Tinotera* has its share of nudity (you'll see more bare flesh than sharks), and there's an interesting cameo from Priscilla Barnes prior to her role on *Three's Company* and *Licence to Kill* (1989). There's also some unwarranted stock footage of sharks being killed, it never reaches the graphic extremes of animal slaughter like what's found in *Cannibal Holocaust* (1980), though it's still not particularly pleasant to watch.

If you're looking for a good summer horror movie with a murderous shark, *Tintorera* probably isn't

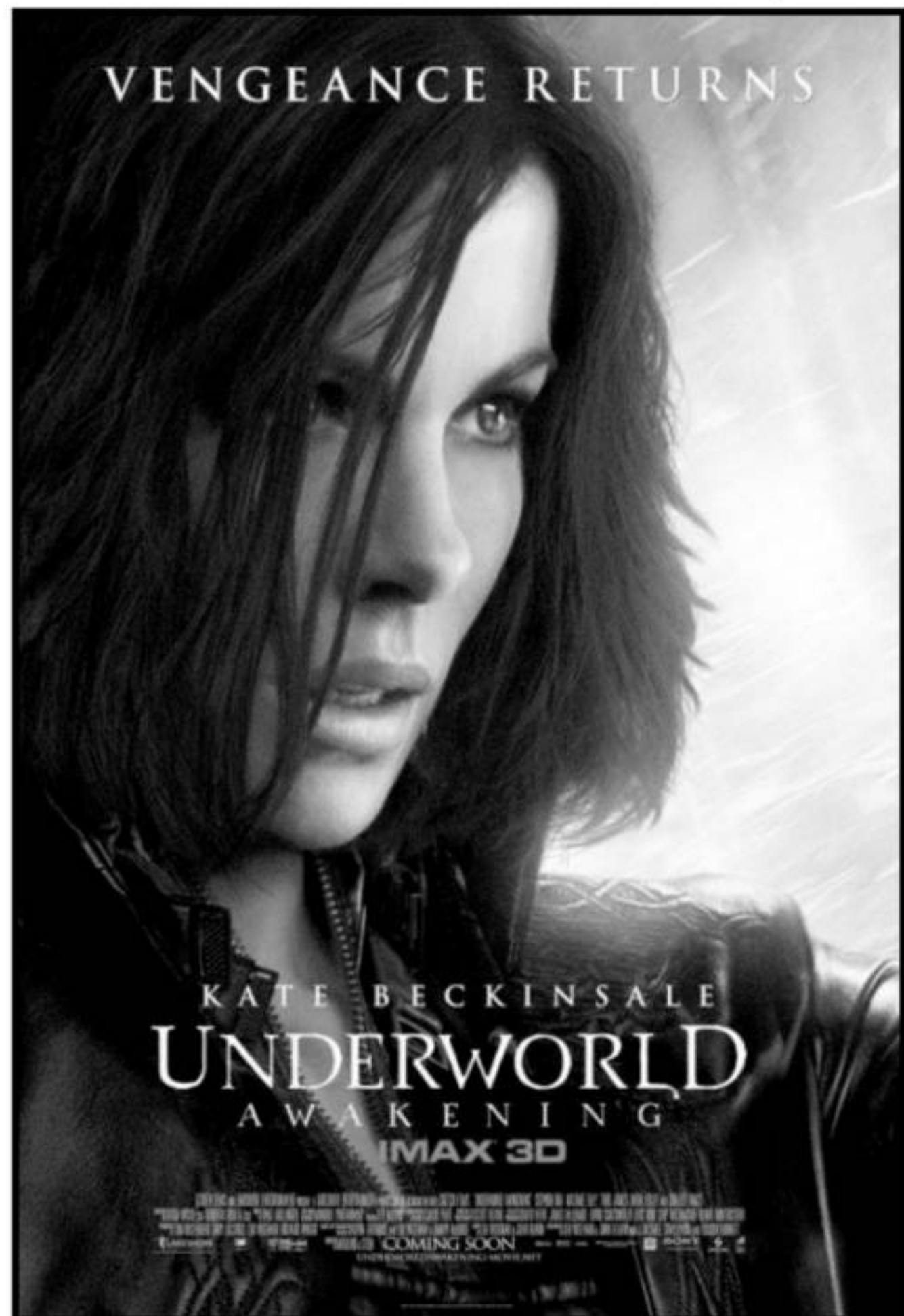
the one to settle on. Not to say it's not worth watching; just because it's such an offbeat divergence from the standard genre fare makes it a curiosity. Those with a taste for B-movies might find it entertaining enough just to see how many different turns the plot takes before becoming a true 'horror film' within the last twenty or so minutes (plus the unintentional humor is always a sure thing in these sort of movies).

To the brave and the bold, there is a 126 minute version of *Tintorera* floating around (the version this reviewer screened was a modest 85 minutes). Rumor has it that the longer cut elaborates on even more subplots, all of which are unrelated to the shark! Yikes!

Reviewed by Mark Sasahara

### UNDERWORLD: AWAKENING

*Screen Gems; 2012, Running Time: 88 Min., Dir: Måns Mårild, Björn Stein, Writers: Len Wiseman, John Hlavin, J. Michael Straczynski, Allison Burnett; Cast: Kate Beckinsale, Stephen Rea, Michael Ealy.*



### CAN NEW BLOOD SAVE THIS FRANCHISE?

*Underworld: Awakening* sees Selene (Kate Beckinsale) return as the vampiric Death Dealer who has fallen in love with a Lycan/Vampire hybrid. The stakes are raised for all concerned when humankind learns about the existence of the supernatural creatures, leading to a great purge that leaves both Lycans and



vampires on the verge of extinction while the few remaining survivors are driven below ground. However, prior to this mass cleansing, Selene is separated from Michael, her hybrid lover from the first two films, and frozen in cryogenic suspension for twelve years. Needless to say, she isn't very happy when she wakes up.

What follows is a cat and mouse game of Selene meeting a coven of Vampire survivors, engaging in a few skirmishes with the Lycans, dodging the authorities and aiding a mysterious young girl. *Underworld: Awakening* is the fourth film in the franchise and it's clear that the series is starting to get a little long in the fang. As with the preceding films, *Awakening* is well shot and some brilliant choreography is on display. Any compliments to the film end there. The entire plot meanders in every direction imaginable but goes nowhere, making one believe that the only excuse for crafting this sequel was to get Beckinsale back in her black skin-tight leather outfit again.

It's true that *Underworld: Awakening* takes a different direction than the previous installments, but it still feels stale and hackneyed. Even the ending

problems.) It's up for assumption that the filmmakers believed their CGI werewolf would 'wow' the audience, all it did for me was get my fingers twitching – urging me to grab the nearest video game controller and take on the giant "boss" character to clear the level. And in this day and age, most games have more coherence and plot to them than what served as the basis for *Awakening*.

Beckinsale's Selene has also grown into a tiresome retread; her cold, callous exterior betrays any hope of aligning sympathy with her character. Her emotional range fluctuates from indifference to anger and nothing in-between. Even when that heinous giant-bestial Lycan shows up, there's no sign of surprise on her face. And what's sad is that Selene is still *more* personable than the rest of the characters in *Awakening*, a hodge-podge of clichés blended together with no real effort. None of this helps speed up the slim eighty-eight minute running time, which is considerable shorter with ten minutes of end credits shaved off.

Next time, a more appropriate title may be beneficial to let audiences *really* know what they're getting into – instead of *Underworld*, the filmmakers could opt for several choices: *Underdeveloped*, *Underwritten*, and *Under-budgeted*. Looks like a whole new trilogy waits in the wings.

Reviewed by Stan Fuller

## ANIME

### HIGH SCHOOL OF THE DEAD

Geneon Universal Entertainment;  
2010, 12 episodes. Based on the  
manga series by Daisuke Sato;  
Dir: Tetsurō Araki; Cast: Junichi  
Suwabe, Marina Inoue, Eri  
Kitamura.

### BLOOD, BOOBS AND BRAINS



culminated in a lost opportunity that resembled the conclusion to every other *Underworld* film. Perhaps this was a case of *too much* creative input? After all, the film had two directors and four screenwriters...though it somehow feels like the entire effort was fashioned in a mere thirty seconds by a lone, slightly inebriated, executive who shook his fist into the air and decreed, "Plot? Who cares about plot, just give 'em action, that's what the people want! And less vampires. Not too many werewolves either. That tripe's gettin' old so...hey wait, I know, maybe a giant werewolf – yeah, the kids love giant werewolves."

Yes, that brings us to the giant werewolf (no joke it actually exists!), a CGI abomination that doesn't deserve to grace the silver screen in the year 2012. Granted, the computer graphics would be more than adequate for a SyFy channel movie, but not in theaters, not with a supposedly 'big budget' film, and let alone in 3D. (A quick aside, the 3D in *Awakening* was yet another wasted effort, but that's the least of the film's

Takashi Komuro is a normal high school boy, until an infection breaks out that turns people into zombie-like creatures. Along with his friends and the school nurse, they fight their way out of their school and continue on a journey to find out what exactly has happened to the world around them. As they try to survive this horrific apocalypse, they must also face the additional threats of societal collapse, in the form of dangerous fellow survivors, and the possible decay of their own moral codes.

Based on the popular manga series by Daisuke Sato, *High School of the Dead* presents an extravagant culmination of all that encompasses what is known as the zombie genre within horror. Opening rather subtly through a poignant soliloquy regarding the end of the world offered up by main protagonist Takashi, the series is quite the difficult one to gauge considering its diverse range of topics coupled with its puzzling execution. Both fantastically consumed by its usage of fan service as it is with showcasing the destructive collapse of society if the



proper elements are in place, it's an approach that paints the series *unique* at best. But it's through this approach that positions the series within a very strenuous dichotomy, a contrast that could equally alienate viewers as well as garner their appreciation. Do fans of horror appreciate the strides the series makes in producing a well-constructed and honest narrative on the break down of society, or does it stumble in its attempt to do so given the mockery it makes pertaining to its female cast? It's this conflicted approach that makes *High School of the Dead* a very compelling series to say the least.

Beginning like so many other forms of entertainment dealing with the likes of a zombie apocalypse, *High School of the Dead* is both horrific in its portrayal of a dystopian environment and as a look into the psychological deterioration of the individual stemming from such circumstances. While this premise is certainly not original, it allows the series to continually raise many issues concerning the collapse of the social structuring of civilization—particularly that from the perspective of a teenager. This remains the series' strongest point in that it focuses extensively on the young adults who are left behind to fend for themselves as the world they once knew slowly collapses around them, with the important role of adults within society loudly extinguished. We as viewers begin to see what these characters took for granted within their daily lives as this normality steadily vanishes, and what they have to learn in its place—such as shooting a gun at both humans and zombies alike—in order to survive. This is where the numerous inner monologues by Takashi provide great insight into the devastation and carnage surrounding him and his peers. They offer up a perspective of a world slipping into chaos and the helplessness of not being able to influence that outcome. The inclusion of such monologues with the series broadens our sympathy for the outcome of his plight,

Its a case of the walking dead as Rei and Saeko are cornered by a horde of the undead.



specifically his reoccurring acknowledgment of a past world—and life—in which he will never have the opportunity to return to again.

This notion of young adults surviving in a world where there is no law further extends to the remainder of the cast as well. Whether this is seen through Rei Miyamoto's questionable relationship with fellow classmate Takashi after he unwillingly has to kill her boyfriend—who is also Takashi's best friend—after he becomes infected, to Saya Takagi questioning the



role of her own parents given their supposed abandonment of her when everything started to go awry, it's a narrative exploring the emotional corruption and supplanting of moral values in place of Darwinistic principles of survival. It's in this turbulent landscape where the series thrives as an example of horror with substance, a rarity that is often omitted in many modern exercises of the genre. The narrative—when seriously addressed—is where one can find *High School of the Dead* at its most elaborate and thoughtful exploration on the human need to survive.



One element of the series that also remains strong is the animation, done here by Studio Madhouse. For a television series, *High School of the Dead* offers excellent visuals throughout, whether this stems from its zombie-ravaged scenes of metropolitan chaos, to scenes of tranquility as cherry blossoms slowly fall to the ground amidst a schoolyard, Madhouse definitely pulled no stops in realizing the world of the series. The technical prowess also extends to the rambunctious nature of the action sequences found throughout the show. Done with considerable aplomb, the action sequences within the series are distinct, well choreographed, and brutal—all elements that culminate in creating memorable scenes in literally every episode. Similar to how the series doesn't hold back in terms of fan service, in the same vein we find the segments of action as examples of utter savageness as heads are grotesquely bashed in, limbs are quickly detached, and vicious stab wounds are the order of the day. Besides the obvious outlandish female character designs—which one should note that *High School of the Dead* was main illustrator Shojo Sato's first non-hentai title, which certainly doesn't alleviate his influence from within that



genre from being viewed here as well—the characters are also given discrete appearances. Madhouse did a fantastic job with this aspect of the series, and really complemented the look the manga series from a visual standpoint.

But for every element exploring the decay of society throughout the series, there is an equal amount of fan service put forth, an aspect of the show that may hinder it from reaching its true potential for many viewers. *High School of the Dead* is one series that doesn't shy away from showcasing exuberant amounts of the female anatomy, often times in the most ridiculous manner possible. This approach towards the females within the show doesn't correlate well with the rather somber nature of the plot, but one can certainly see the satirical elements it injects into it. In one episode of the series, this notion is brought forth quite clearly after one of the female characters is asked why she is so ditzy, in which she replies, "*Because the author wrote me this way.*" Its moments like this one that truly harp on the playful yet raunchy nature concerning the female cast within the show, a cast that are often delegated to increasingly excessive sexual behavior for the sake of appeasing a certain demographical audience. This is where *High School of the Dead* may lose some viewers as it simply becomes too overbearing as the series

progresses. There is even an entire episode seemingly dedicated to fully exploiting the female cast in the most absurd way, and while one can understand the humor behind such an episode, it simply obscures an otherwise interesting narrative. Perhaps if less focus were paid upon the grandiosity of a woman's chest size, then *High School of the Dead* could've spent more time on successfully carrying out its already solid plot.

So how does one view *High School of the Dead*? One can argue that it provides a look into the social decay of a civilization sadly gone askew. Maybe it's also just a common horror series with an abundant amount of satire and fan service layered throughout? Or perhaps, in a most unconventional way, it combines both in order to create something experimental but also familiar in nature? While the series does display an appreciable commentary on societal collapse, it's also marred by its excessive—but often times extremely sarcastic—use of its female cast as they are utilized to specifically appease a male audience. It's this contrast that can either lead to the discouragement or satisfaction of some viewers, which presents a polarizing view on a series with an otherwise action-packed and interesting story outside its heavy use of fan service. While the usage of fan service does get incredibly repetitive as the series progresses, it has to be taken as a part of the series, no matter how incidental it may seem given the weighty subject material at hand. Besides these elements of the show, *High School of the Dead* is still a highly enjoyable and boisterous tale of young adults attempting to survive amidst a relentless assault from the undead, all the while dealing with many of the issues that encompass youth—love, friendship, jealousy, just to name a few—which makes it one of the finer, yet odder anime horror series to come around in quite some time.

Reviewed by Miguel Douglas

*Be sure to visit [www.iSugoi.com](http://www.iSugoi.com) for more reviews on Japanese animation and cinema.*

### **THE MELANCHOLY OF HARUHI SUZUMIYA**

*Kadokawa Entertainment; 2006/2009, 28 episodes.*

*Based on the novel series by Nagaru Tanigawa; Dir: Tatsuya Ishihara; Cast: Tomokazu Sugita, Aya Hirano, Minori Chihara.*

### **BOREDOM CAN LEAD TO THE END OF THE WORLD**

Kyon is just your average run-of-the-mill teenager about to begin high school, merely content with getting through one day at a time. On the first day of class he meets Haruhi Suzumiya, a strange, eccentric – and very attractive – girl who claims that she's not interested in ordinary humans, but would like to meet aliens, time travelers, and espers. Kyon, being the cynical and incredulous type, finds it difficult to believe that Haruhi is serious, but quickly finds out that her quest for the paranormal is nothing to scoff at. As fate would have it, Haruhi's seat is designated behind Kyon's; despite Haruhi's cold demeanor toward her



fellow classmates, he routinely strikes up conversation with her. One of Kyon's offhand remarks leads Haruhi to form the SOS Brigade, an after-school club that investigates mysterious phenomena. Kyon is reluctantly dragged into the club and three additional members are recruited: Yuki Nagato, a quiet bibliophile (and the literary club's only member), Mikuru Asahina, a timid introvert, and Itsuki Koizumi, a sociable transfer student.

As it turns out, the SOS Brigade members are far from your everyday students...Yuki is an alien, Mikuru is a time traveler, and Itsuki is an esper. The truth is revealed only to Kyon however, along with the reason why they've all gathered in one place, because of one special person: Haruhi Suzumiya. Much to Kyon's disbelief, the

very world itself and all aspects of reality are susceptible to Haruhi's every whim; she could even destroy or recreate the universe with little more than a thought. Fortunately, Haruhi is unaware that she possesses such power, forcing Kyon and the others to keep her happy and interested in 'this world' lest the very fabric of time and space become undone!

*The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya* enlists a cast of characters that are stereotypical of most sci-fi/fantasy anime titles, but it's what the series chooses to do with these characters that makes *Haruhi* stand out amongst its peers. For a show that has such an assortment of extraordinary players, it's surprisingly toned-down, allowing for the viewer to become involved and invested with each and every character. Haruhi Suzumiya's name may be the show's title, but she's not the central focus; rather, Kyon is the one who we take this interesting journey with and are often treated to his humorous internal monologues and droll thoughts along the way.

The show combines a fair amount of drama, comedy and action; it does have a tendency to become a mind-trip, shattering the expectations and conceptions of

the viewer. Because of this, anyone looking for nonstop off-the-wall action or unremitting comedic slapstick could find these more philosophical scenes a little wordy. For those that stay the course, there really is some captivating philosophy to be found between the lines. *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya* benefits because all of the characters, each in their own way, grow as individuals as the show progresses.

Out of the show's two seasons the first is by and large the superior effort. The initial season has a grander scale with episodes focusing on the main characters trying to keep Haruhi amused by entering a baseball tournament, solving a murder mystery, and engaging the school's computer club in a video game competition. The highlight of the

second season is an integral time travel episode, "Bamboo Leaf Rhapsody" that's one of the series' shining moments. "The Sigh of Haruhi Suzumiya" five-parter has the SOS Brigade filming a short movie, which is made excruciatingly difficult to accomplish thanks to Haruhi's powers. What tarnishes season two is the controversial "Endless Eight" episodes: eight episodes where the SOS Brigade is stuck in a continual time loop having to repeat the same series of events over and over. What's remarkable is that despite the storyline being nearly the same for all eight episodes, the animation and dubbing were different in each one. Still, by the third or fourth episode of enduring the same events transpiring over again, the pacing of the season is destroyed.

The first season of *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya* was released in 2006 and the second season came out in 2009. When the initial season aired in Japan, it was broadcast out of chronological order, but most DVD releases have since rearranged them in a sequential format (the recommended way to view the series).

The animation in *Haruhi Suzumiya* is vibrant, detailed and a pleasure to watch. The company responsible for the series, Kyoto Animation, hasn't cut any corners with this production. The Japanese voice actors do a magnificent job bringing the characters to life; in most cases English dubs get a bad rap, but not so with this one, the actors give it their all and I found myself sticking with the dub over the originals while screening the show.

Fans of the series will also want to check out *The Disappearance of Haruhi Suzumiya*, a feature-length animated film that enters *It's A Wonderful Life*





territory with some Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse Five* thrown into the mix. *Disappearance* focuses on a plot involving alternate dimensions and time travel, but it's only recommended *after* seeing the two seasons, or else much won't make sense.

*The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya* originates from a series of novels by Japanese author Nagaru Tanigawa. Anyone who has read the novels will find that the anime adheres very closely to its source material. The series has built up a huge following, with supporters that will defend the show to their last breath. As with anything, there are also detractors who argue that there's "not enough substance" in the series and suffers from a "lack of closure." The closure argument is valid, though there's always the chance a third season of the show or more films could be made (the novels have many more stories than what was translated into animation). As for the substance debate, that's what makes *Haruhi Suzumiya* such a wonderfully engaging series, the substance *is* there, but so much of it is subtle. Not everything is laid out into the open, some of it needs to be simply thought about and, upon multiple viewings, even more detail comes to light. Not everyone will enjoy *The Melancholy of Haruhi Suzumiya*, and not everyone will see the finer points of the series like the philosophical aspects but, those that do, are in for an adventure.

Reviewed by Lisa Stilts

## VIDEO GAMES:

### NINJA GAIDEN 3

Tecmo Koei; 2012, Team Ninja; Platforms: Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3

### WORTHY OF A NINJA MASTER, OR JUST A BLOODY MESS?

I make no claims that I am the best gamer out there. On the contrary, I divulge that, at times, my skill with a controller is just enough to get me by. Knowing that, it comes as no surprise that I've always had a love/hate relationship with the *Ninja Gaiden* series – some of the most frustratingly difficult games ever created. 2004's *Ninja Gaiden* for the Xbox cost me more than one ill-fated controller (all hurled at the wall) because the game's difficulty can reach inhuman echelons of utter aggravation. Eventually, though it escapes me how, I beat the game and lived on to play *Ninja Gaiden 2* (a more forgiving follow-up that didn't result in the player having a nervous breakdown).

What makes me stick with the *Ninja Gaiden* franchise is not

that I enjoy punishing myself with nigh unbeatable boss battles, but that I find myself captivated by the basic premise of ninja vs. ninja and ninja vs. otherworldly demon gameplay, plus the beautiful graphics never hurt either. While I may whine about some of the grueling aspects of these games, both *Ninja Gaiden* titles were very fun to play through, even if the characters and story can be rather shallow and redundant. But let's face it, what other game can you play as a ninja, ricochet up a wall, hurl an assortment of shuriken at your foe and behead them with your coveted Dragon Sword – all while leaving a blazing blue afterimage in your path, compliments of your amazing speed?

Now enter *Ninja Gaiden 3* – and my love/hate relationship with the series continues anew. First off, *Ninja Gaiden 3* charts a different course than its two predecessors; this time the game's protagonist, Ryu Hayabusa, tests his razor sharp sword against the likes of a mysterious terrorist group. This marks a drastic change of pace, substituting the monstrous demons (the Fiends) of previous entries for mostly human adversaries. A little change can be nice, right? Unfortunately, the new enemies aren't very interesting, and since you'll be tackling thousands of them (literally!) before the game is through, it becomes a lingering problem. Also, be prepared to hear your enemies spout out the same snippets of dialogue over and over again while you hack and slash your way through wave after wave of them. There's only so long you can hear "A ninja!" "He's a monster!" before you start lowering the volume, or hitting the mute button, in an effort to silence the recycled sound bites.

Graphics wise, a *Ninja Gaiden* game has never looked better. The character models are exceptional and it's yet another step forward for a series that has always employed stellar graphics. A bunch of action takes place on the screen at once and everything was fluid and I spotted no apparent frame rate drop (there's been some rumor of excessive frame rate slowdown on higher difficulty levels but, having stayed with the lower difficulty settings, I can neither confirm nor deny this).

Speaking of difficulty, that brings us to a *major* benefit of *Ninja Gaiden 3* – the difficulty curve has been lessened, making it far more accessible to the casual gamer. The hardcore *Ninja Gaiden* fan won't feel left out either, as there are harder settings as well. A good deal of Ryu's signature moves will be familiar to those who had played the last two games, but there have been changes and few were for the better. Ryu, in the series' previous entries, could use an assortment of ninpo magic to dispatch his enemies, often resulting in spectacular feats of devastation. You always had a choice of which ninpo attack you wanted to use, and all were upgraded as you went through the game. For some reason, Team Ninja, the company behind the *Ninja Gaiden* series, deemed fit to only bestow Ryu







with one ninpo attack this time around. While seeing Ryu conjure a fiery spectral dragon to eliminate his enemies is neat, it gets tiresome after the first dozen or so times. A little variety would have gone a long way.

Also discarded is Ryu's arsenal of weapons from prior games. It used to be fun switching back and forth between the Eclipse Scythe, Lunar Staff, Vigoorian Flail, and Kusari-gama, but *Ninja Gaiden 3* does away with them all. Instead, Ryu is consigned to his ol' Dragon Sword and a few other meager offerings like a bow and his practically useless shuriken. A few new weapons can be attained online via some free DLC, but it's not really worth the effort.

The elixirs that used to restore Ryu's life bar and ninpo magic gauges have been exorcised as well. Why did Team Ninja feel the need to give these elements such an overhaul? Instead, more attention should have been given to the repetitive gameplay mechanics. It's true that most 'hack and slash' games have the potential to get monotonous, but the best ones find ways to mix things up for the player, keeping the pacing fresh and interesting. What *Ninja Gaiden 3* offers is nothing new, just more generic henchmen to replace the countless generic henchmen you just massacred seconds ago.

Speaking of massacres, I don't mind gore in movies and games, but *Ninja Gaiden 3* has *so much* blood that all of the slasher films combined couldn't hold a bloody knife to it. In the end it seems a little unnecessary and, in relation to the story, a bit jarring. The plot of *Ninja Gaiden 3* deals with redemption and Ryu's murderous past, but apparently that justifies *more* bloodshed. For example, there's a scene where an enemy pleads for his life, claiming that he has a family, etc. Your option? Slaughter him. Not just murder him where he stands, outright *slaughter* him. It would have been nice if there actually was an option to spare him, instead of being led into a quicktime event that has your Dragon

Sword shredding through his bones. It all seems to be a little at odds with the kinder, gentler – more human – Ryu that the makers of the game were hoping to flesh out. The decapitations and dismemberments of the previous installments were more fun and, ironically, felt less gratuitous than the geysers of blood here.

Boss fights never live up to expectations either, and lack the imagination of the Vigoor Emperor from NG1 and Volf, the werewolf, from NG2. The most creative – and absurd – moment arrives when Ryu takes on a T-Rex! Unfortunately, it's not as fun as it sounds.

*Ninja Gaiden 3* is not all bad; there are some creative glimmers here and there. A new stealth mechanic is incorporated where Ryu can sneak up behind his foe and take them out with a 'one move kill'. This is done nicely when Ryu is being hunted on a fog shrouded street. These moments are far too underused however. The same can be said for the gliding technique that has you leaping from massive heights to take out opponents. Ryu can now slide under trucks and physical impediments with ease, along with wall climbing. These are fun additions and the quicktime events, which require the player to press a specific button as directed on-screen before time runs out, are equally enjoyable in small doses.

*Ninja Gaiden 3* has an online multiplayer mode, but it feels like something that was tacked on at the last minute – not to mention there's hardly anyone on the server to play against. PlayStation 3 owners will find that *Ninja Gaiden 3* is compatible with the PlayStation Move motion controller. Don't expect to swing your controller and for Ryu to follow suit by swinging his sword; alas, these are some of the most counterintuitive motion controls ever devised. Stick with the standard controller.

I don't hate *Ninja Gaiden 3*, it's certainly easier than the previous NG games and that's a big



improvement in my book, at least from a playability standpoint. I did enjoy getting through the nine or so hours of playtime to complete the muddled story mode, even if it did become extremely repetitive. Maybe my *real* enjoyment came from knowing that, for once, I wasn't being killed every thirty seconds while playing a Ninja Gaiden game.

Gamers on the prowl for a good ninja title may want to look elsewhere or, at most, opt for a rental of this one.

Reviewed by Alexander Bochner

### METAL GEAR SOLID HD COLLECTION

Konami; 2011, Kojima Productions; Platforms: Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3



### A SOLID HELPING OF TACTICAL ESPIONAGE ACTION

Super soldiers, psychics, cyborg ninjas, genetically engineered troops, isolated military bases, and bipedal nuclear-armed mechs – this is the recipe that made *Metal Gear Solid* an unbelievably successful franchise in the gaming world. The term ‘blockbuster’ is not often used to describe video games, but the cinematic powerhouse of *Metal Gear Solid* deserves it more than any other.

The brainchild of Hideo Kojima, *Metal Gear* first hit the scene back in 1987 on the Japanese MSX platform and a port of the game arrived on the Nintendo Entertainment System in 1988. It wasn't until ten years later, in 1998, that *Metal Gear Solid* was released for the PlayStation when the game finally came into its own, single-handedly defining the stealth genre for years to come. The stealth aspect is what sets MGS so far apart from countless other games; the point is never to ‘run and gun’ and mow down enemies, but to *avoid*

confrontation at all costs (players can clear an entire game without killing a single enemy). The player is often provided with very few supplies, most of which have to be procured on site, and has to sneak into a designated location – only assisted by radio communication from a small support group. Since 1998's *Metal Gear Solid*, Hideo Kojima has redefined his brand of video games as something more akin to ‘playing a Hollywood movie’ complete with hours of dialogue, lengthy cut scenes, and a rapid onslaught of plot twists.

The *Metal Gear Solid HD Collection* gathers three of the franchise's best titles with *MGS2: Sons of Liberty*, *MGS3: Snake Eater*, and *MGS: Peace Walker*. Each one has been remastered in 720p high definition and overhauled to run at 60 frames per second. *MGS2: Sons of Liberty* was released back in 2001 on the PlayStation 2 and it still holds up remarkably well for a game over a decade old. The downside is that the control layout is dated and takes some getting used to, especially for those who sunk hours into the PlayStation 3's streamlined *Metal Gear Solid 4: Guns of the Patriots*. *MGS2* also relies on fixed camera angles, instead of letting the player control the camera themselves which, while fine in 2001, hinders the game slightly in 2012. None of it really matters though, because within the first half-hour the player will be so engrossed in the exploits of the characters that the controls, graphics, and camera will become minor trivialities. Upon its original release *MGS2* received much criticism from the gaming community for swapping the series' main character, Solid Snake, with newcomer Raiden, a vacillating rookie. Another bone of contention was the complicated story dealing with secret organizations, artificial intelligence and a mass conspiracy. Some still continue to cite *MGS2*'s plot as a weak point; in retrospect, the storyline doesn't seem as convoluted as it once was and could easily be considered one of the most intelligent stories ever devised for a video game – one that makes the player question and evaluate both the game they're playing as well as the world around them.

*MGS3: Snake Eater* is set in 1964, during the height of the Cold War. The protagonist, Naked Snake must infiltrate the jungles of the Soviet Union to rescue a prominent scientist. *MGS3* lays down the foundations for the rest of the series and is one of the most accessible *Metal Gear* games of the bunch with some of the best ‘boss battles’ ever (a sniper shootout that could last hours is only one of the unique battles players will get to partake in). The added thrill of collecting your own food and mending your wounds was an added feature that has never been replicated so well in any game before or since. Released in 2004 on the PS2, this is the prized jewel of the HD Collection, the high definition resolution accommodates *MGS3* very well and the 5.1 Dolby Digital Surround puts you right in the middle of the Soviet jungle with Snake. *MGS3* also includes two camera options, either the ‘fixed’ method like in *MGS2* or a free control where the player moves the camera via the right analog stick.

*MGS: Peace Walker* rounds out the collection, taking place a decade after *MGS3*. Released onto the PlayStation Portable in 2010, *Peace Walker* has the optimum control scheme on the collection, one that has

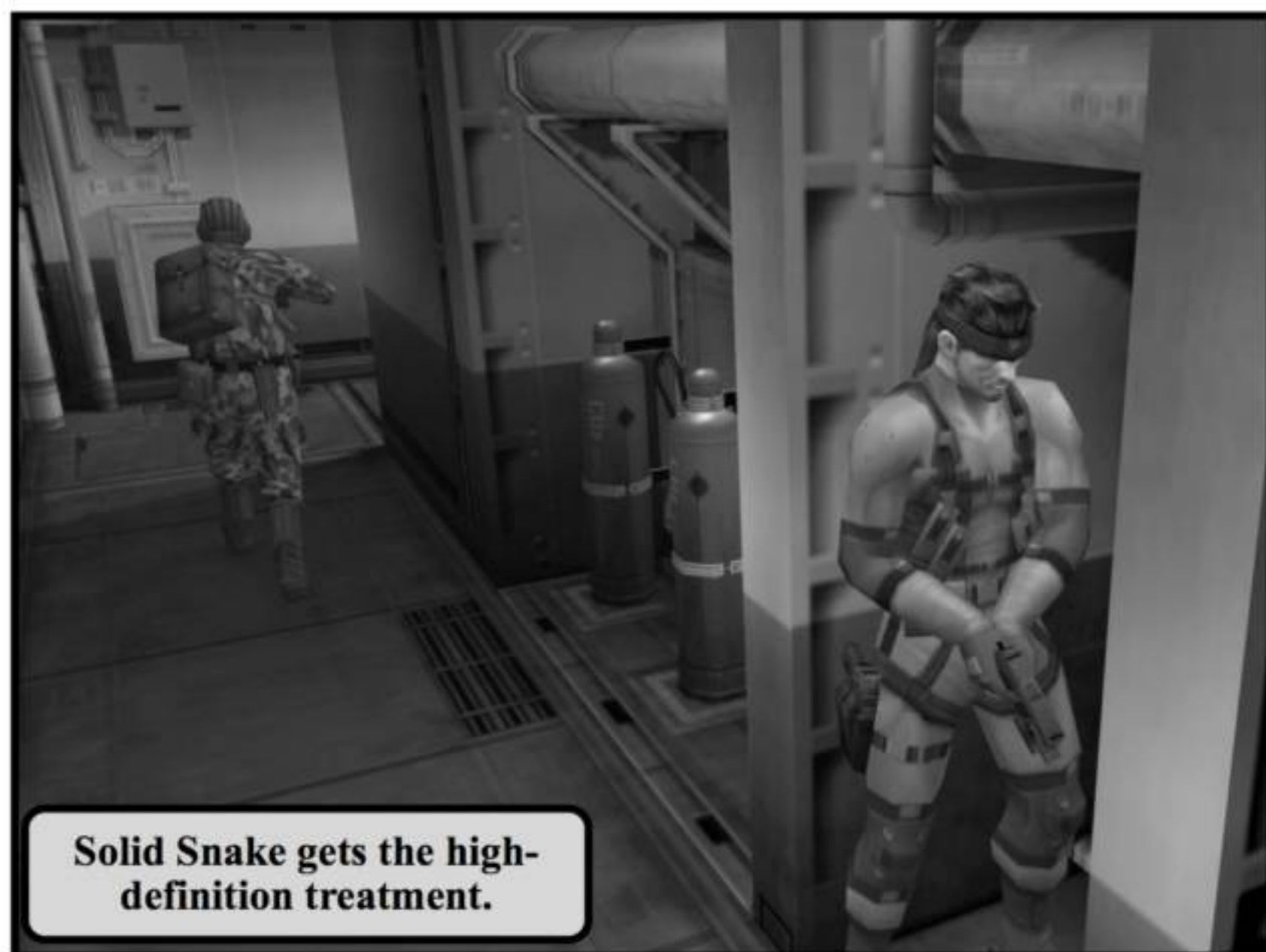


been further enhanced – the original PSP version lacked a right analog stick, which is put to good use here along with the implementation of a rumble feature. *Peace Walker* looked great on the PSP's small screen but unfortunately it doesn't fare so well in high definition. *Peace Walker* does shine in its inclusion of online support, allowing players to join forces with others around the world to complete missions. Despite originating from the PSP, *Peace Walker* is one of the largest Metal Gear games to date, containing hours upon hours of missions, including weapons development, character collecting, and *Monster Hunter* side-quests. Just because *Peace Walker* is now on the console doesn't mean you need to put your PSP away. *Peace Walker*'s save data can be transferred from PS3 to PSP by a method called 'Transferring', allowing for the best of both worlds and letting players take their 'portable ops' on the go.

Missing from this set is the original *Metal Gear Solid*, an unfortunate omission. Upgrading an original PS1 game into HD may not have been possible, but it's a disappointment that the GameCube remake, *MGS: The Twin Snakes* wasn't at least ported over. As far as 'bang for your buck' is concerned, the *Metal Gear Solid HD Collection* is the deal of the year. You're not really getting three games, but five – the original *Metal Gear* and *Metal Gear 2: Solid Snake* for the MSX have also been included. All three titles have full achievement/trophy support too, so there's enough to keep even the most hardened Metal Gear fan busy for some time.

In short, whether you're a Metal Gear Solid veteran or were always on the fence about giving the games a try, this collection is a no-brainer. The MGS franchise has been known for its long cutscenes (admittedly some can drag on to the point of absurdity), the lip-synching may not always match up, and MGS2 suffers from last-gen controls, but they are each minor quibbles for a chance to play three of the greatest games to ever be made, pre-HD or current.

Reviewed by Philip Shears



Solid Snake gets the high-definition treatment.

## COLLECTIBLES

### THE MUNSTERS ACTION FIGURES

*Diamond Select; 2011.*



### MUNSTROUS GOODIES FOR COLLECTORS

*Munsters* enthusiasts can now take a trip back down 1313 Mockingbird Lane with Diamond Select's action figure line. Whether you originally watched the show back in the 1960s, caught the re-runs on Nick at Nite, or were introduced to the series thanks to DVD, *The Munsters* has an undeniable generation-spanning appeal that still evokes laughter today. Diamond Select's first *Munsters* line includes Herman, Lily and Grandpa, each sculpted by Jean St. Jean, whose superb detailing has graced figures from McFarlane, NECA, Amok Time, DC Direct, and countless other toy companies. There's no mistaking that these are *The Munsters*, but the figures do have a slightly generic, cartoonish look to them as opposed to dead ringer resemblances. This may have been done at Diamond's behest for whatever reason. The detailing is extraordinary, from the outfits to the iconic accessories. Herman comes with an oversized lunch box, Lily is packaged with the show's signature grandfather clock (complete with raven), and Grandpa has the most goodies, including a table, multiple flasks, chemistry equipment, two books ("Magic Made Easy" and "Love Spells"), a bat, an alternate hand with cigar, and his cape.

If ordered online, each figure includes pieces of an electric chair for Herman (these accessories were not packaged in cases shipped to brick-and-mortar stores). The articulation on all three are handled well, allowing for



some fine movement and poses while not making the joints too noticeable to the passing eye. At a glance Herman has the most joints, whereas Lily's is covered up by her dress. The downside is for anyone who wants to keep the figures inside their boxes and has limited room to display them. Diamond Select is notorious for packaging their figures in extra-large boxes, making it a chore to find room to store them. If you do intend to take them out of the boxes, be prepared to tangle with more twist ties than can be counted. However these Diamond Select *Munsters* figures, each standing at around 7", are sure to enliven any collector's shelf.

Fans will be able to complete the Munsters' family with the imminent release of a Marilyn and Eddie 2-pack that includes stuffed animal Woof Woof and Spot's collar. Diehard completists might want to wait for the deluxe collectors' box set in November 2012, which will have all of the figures with black-and-white paint jobs, an entire floorboard base and display window packaging.



Reviewed by Stan Fuller

## LITERATURE

### BAT-MANGA! THE SECRET HISTORY OF BATMAN IN JAPAN

*Pantheon; 2008, 352 pages, Author: Chip Kidd.*

#### HOLY REPRINTS, BATMAN!

1966, in retrospect, was a stand-out year for the Dynamic Duo; Batman and Robin not only appeared in their hit television show (starring Adam West and Burt Ward) but had graduated from simply being American symbols of comicdom to achieving international recognition. When the show was brought over to Japan, manga publisher Shonen King struck a deal with DC Comics to publish their own series of Batman stories. This adaptation would fall into the capable hands of Jiro Kuwata, the creator of *8 Man*, who would work on the Japanese Batman run from '66 to '67 when it ceased being published. Over the years, despite all the Batman merchandise and reprinted material, the Batman manga has never seen a single reprint.

Fortunately, Chip Kidd has changed that by collecting various chapters from Kuwata's manga series in *Bat-Manga! The Secret History of Batman in Japan*. Story wise, Batman's exploits found in the manga version are quite tame and lack the depth of the modern era of comics – but this shouldn't prevent anyone from checking Kidd's book out. Considering that the Batman manga was a product of the '60s, it's startling to observe



the differences between the Japanese and American art styles. The sense of movement and action are far more palpable in Kuwata's work, and the extra hints of stylization are very welcome in comparison to some of the static mid '60s American artwork.

Manga reprints are far from the only delight found in the pages of Kidd's book. Full-color photos of Japanese Batman collectibles are a great addition,





including rare examples of Batman-themed ray guns, puzzles, vehicles, watches, and even a Batman tank! There's an very informative interview with Kuwata, discussing how he came to be involved with the series and his artistic decisions in adapting it for Japanese readers (it's quite obvious that Kuwata's Batmobile was inspired by the 1960's TV show version).

The only downside is that many of the stories included here are incomplete, so we may enter a story half-way through or never see the proper conclusion. This was due to what was available to Kidd at the time. One can hope that if enough Bat-fans support this book then in the future we may see a volume II!

In conclusion, *Bat-Manga* is a tome to be treasured by any self-respecting Batman fan, especially those interested in a short-lived and somewhat obscure era of the Caped Crusader's history. The manga collected here is presented in the correct right-to-left Japanese format and has been superbly translated into English. It's the only place where you'll read the adventures of Batman as he takes on the likes of Lord Death Man, Professor Gorilla, and Go-Go the Magician! Highly recommended.

Reviewed by Lisa Stilts

### 3-D PETE'S STAR BABE INVASION COMICS #3

Goofa Man Productions; 2012, By Mike Fisher



### RETRO FUN!

If you have a fondness for the curvaceous B-movie babes of the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, then *3-D Pete's Star Babe Invasion Comics* is for you! Issue #3 takes readers from the far reaches of outer space to savage prehistoric lands, featuring cartoon commentaries on *Queen of Outer Space* (1958) and *When Dinosaurs Ruled the Earth* (1970), a 'Cave Cutie Quiz', an exclusive interview with actress and Playboy Playmate, Victoria Vetri (currently incarcerated for attempted manslaughter!), and a sultry smorgasbord of retro-styled artwork of your favorite Star/Cave Babes.

The handiwork of Mike Fisher, *3-D Pete's Star Babe Invasion Comics* is a humorous, fun look at some of cinema's greatest B-movie scream queens. This 24-page digest-sized publication is self-published by Fisher and is in black-and-white, aside from the full color front/back covers and a center spread. The artwork is fantastic (and very easy on the eyes), the layout is accessible – filled with delightful content but never cluttered, and Fisher's welcomed sense of humor permeates each page. Other nice inclusions are the mock-up posters to 'lost' movies like *Escape from Atlantis* and *Deep Space Vixen*. The interview with Victoria Vetri will be insightful for *Star Trek* fans, finally setting the record straight if she did or did not appear in the "Assignment: Earth" episode of Gene Roddenberry's original sci-fi series (you'll have to read the issue to find out!).

To get a copy of *Star Babe Invasion Comics* #3 just send \$5 to Mike Fisher, 510 Enchanted Way, San Antonio, Texas, 78260. You can visit Fisher's official website at [www.goofaman.com](http://www.goofaman.com) or contact him via email at [galacticfish61@gmail.com](mailto:galacticfish61@gmail.com).

Reviewed by Andrew Parietti





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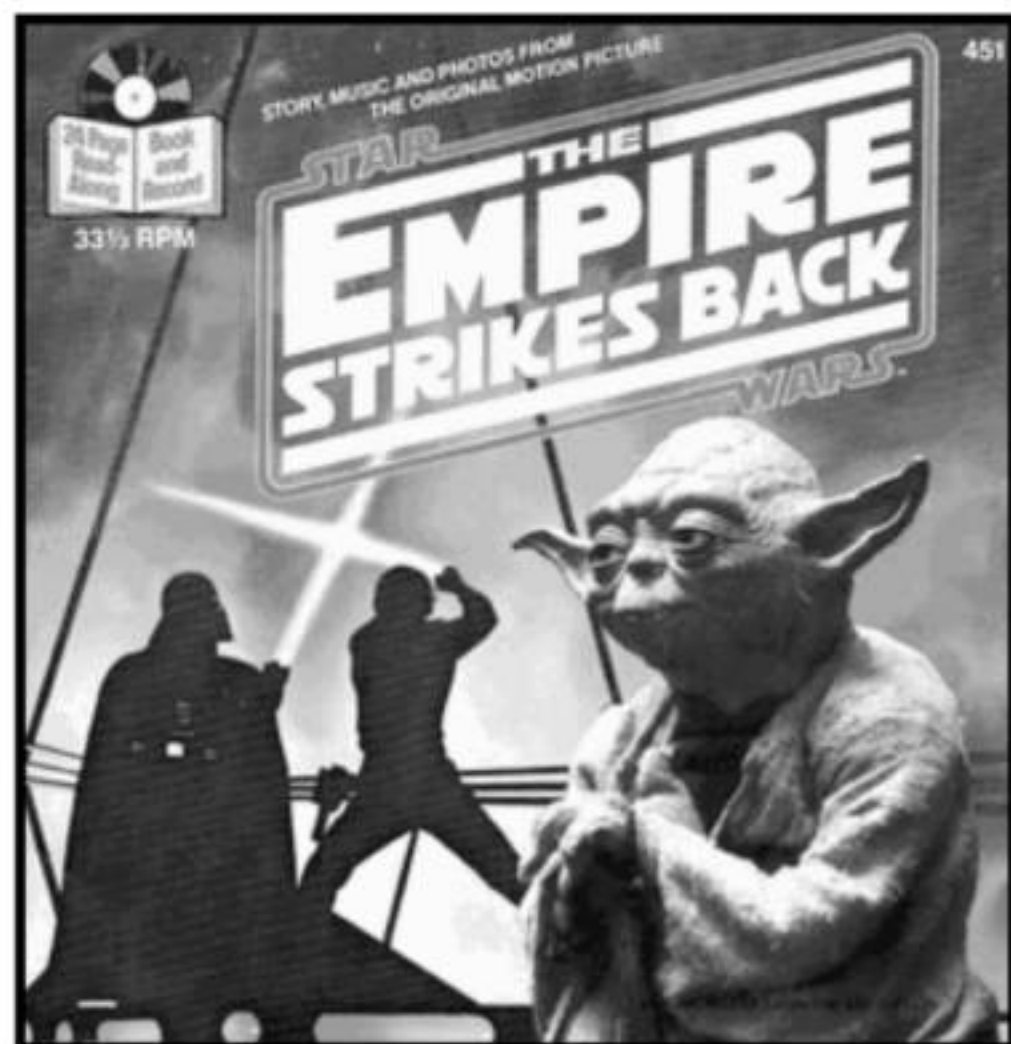


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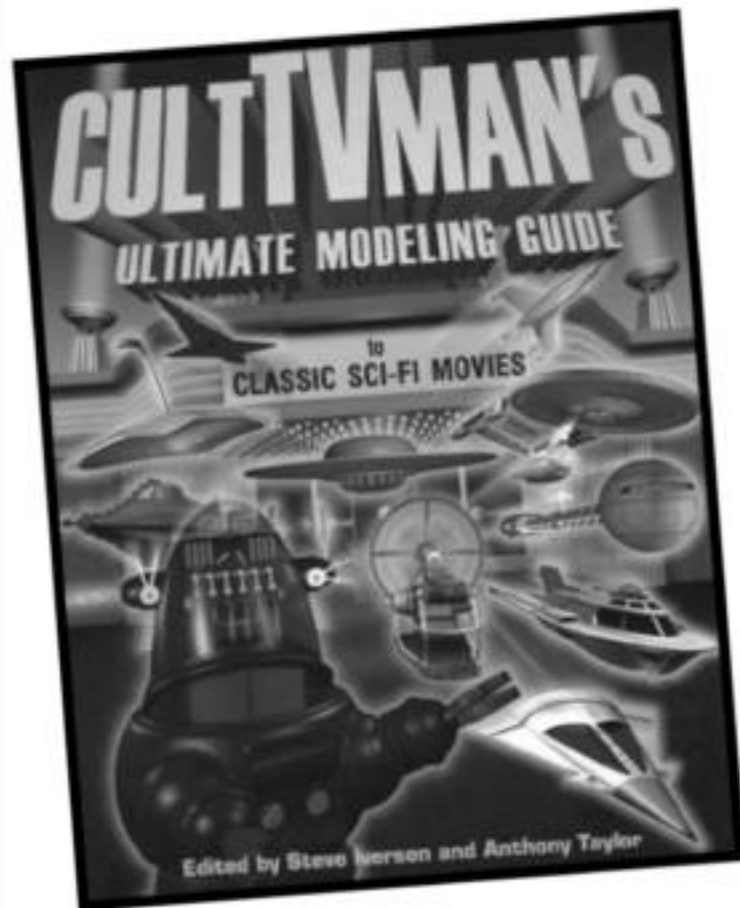
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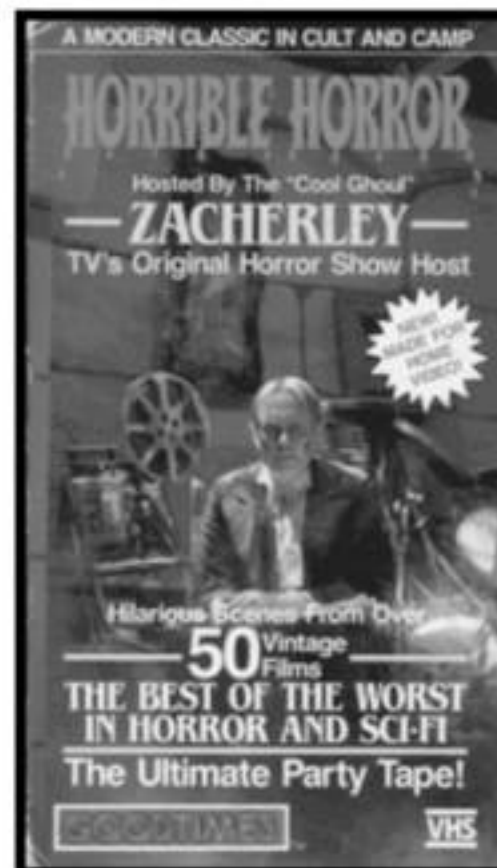
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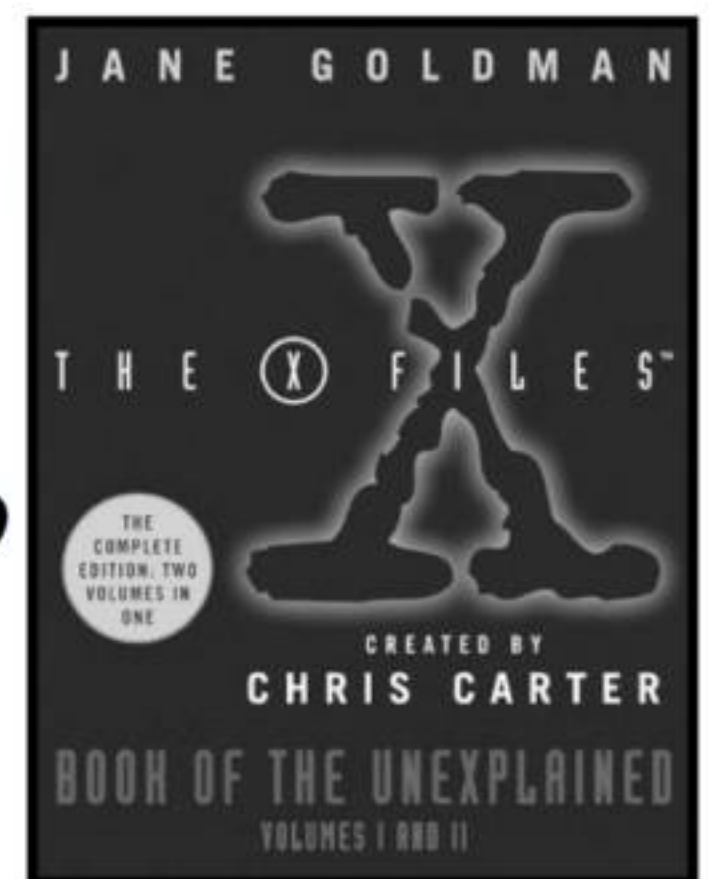
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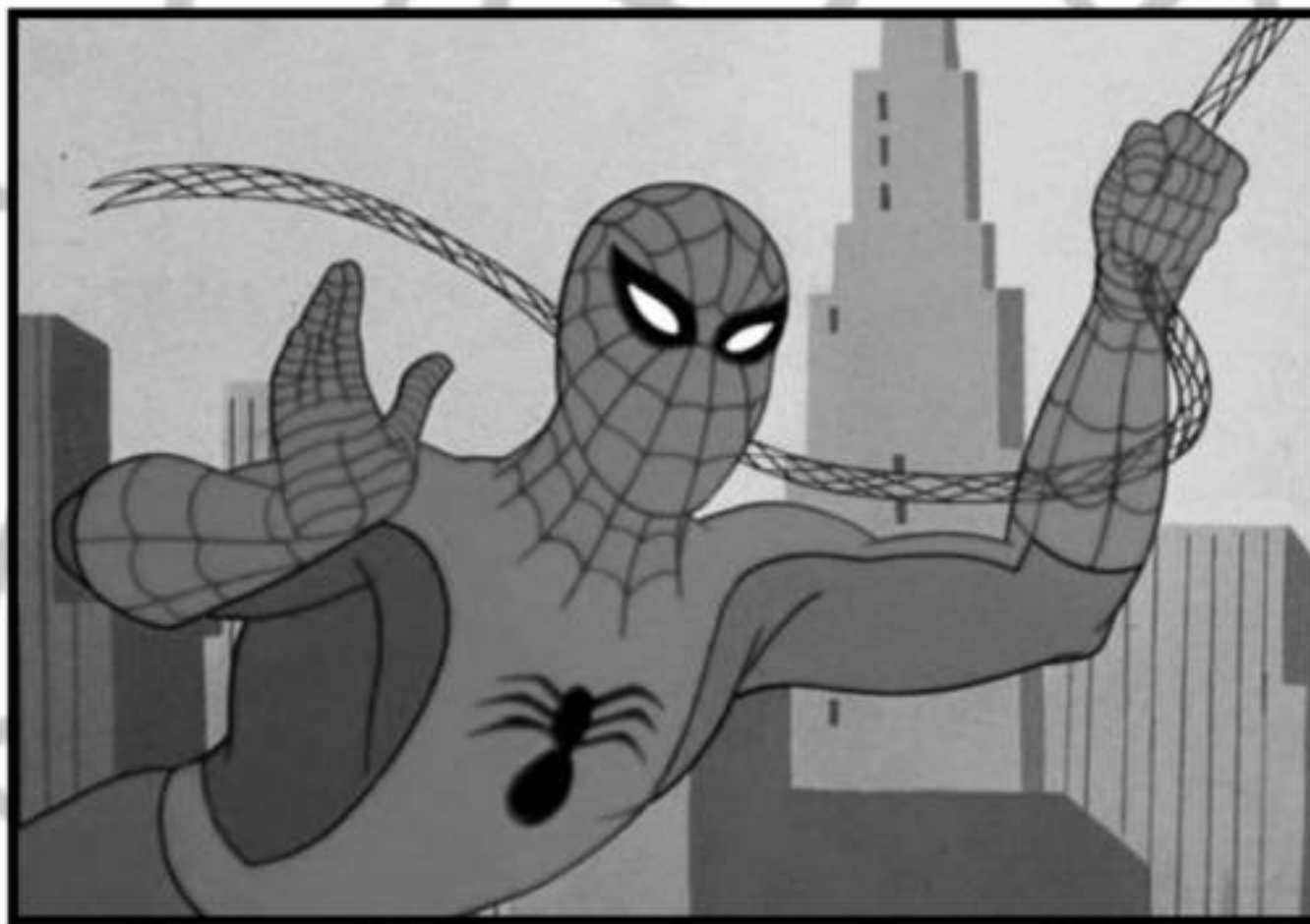


## SPIDER-MAN ON TELEVISION!

Marvel's famed wall crawler may have spun his web across theaters this summer with *The Amazing Spider-Man*, but prior to Spidey's big-budget spectacles the comic icon had a long run of television appearances, both animated and live-action. *Shadowland Magazine* takes a visual look back at the web-slinger's small screen adventures, whether they be amazing, spectacular, ultimate, or disappointing!



### SPIDER-MAN (1967)



### THE ELECTRIC COMPANY (1974)



### THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN (1977)







***SPIDER-MAN (aka  
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***SPIDER-  
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***SPIDER-MAN AND HIS  
AMAZING FRIENDS (1981)***



***SPIDER-MAN  
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***SPIDER-MAN  
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***SPIDER-MAN: THE  
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SERIES (2003)***



***THE SPECTACULAR  
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***ULTIMATE SPIDER-  
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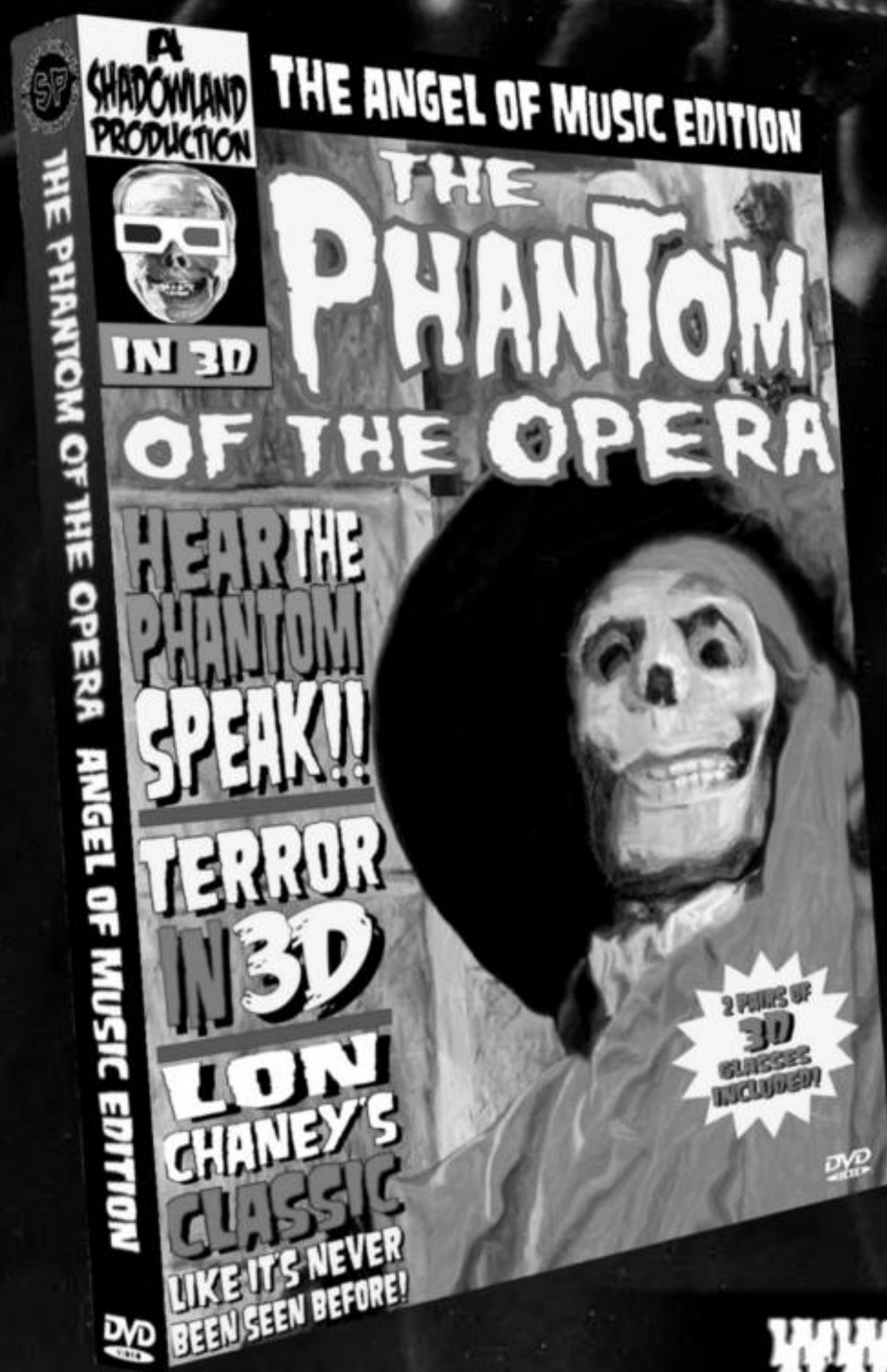


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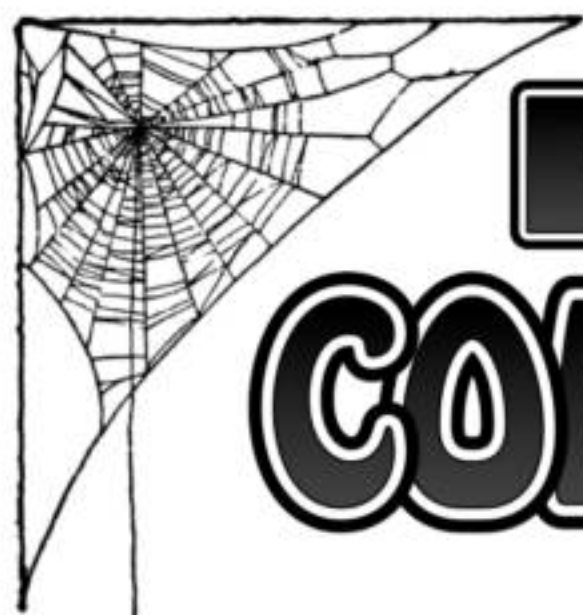


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# DAVEY HORROR'S COLLECTOR'S CORNER

## THE THREE STOOGES MEET THE MUMMY

Not one to keep his latest project under wraps, Davey Horror shares his new monster masterpiece with Shadowfans...

Nyuk, nyuk, nyuk! The Three Stooges are adept at stumbling and bumbling into all kinds of comical hijinks, unfortunately they never crossed paths with the variety of monsters that Abbott and Costello did. Sure, the Stooges had their share of haunted houses, mad doctors, gorillas, Martians, a wolf-man, and even a mummy (which turned out to only be a costumed thug) – but they didn't meet *the* Mummy. Of course, we're talking about the great Boris Karloff as the one and only Imhotep. Now, with the miracle of styrene plastic, such a larger-than-life encounter is entirely possible!

The Three Stooges kits – Moe, Larry and Curly – originated from the Polar Lights series of plastic models released back in 1999 (reproductions of the Stooze trio are currently available from the company Round 2). The Mummy was from Moebius Models' 2009 release. For this customization all the kits bases were discarded and a new base, along with an adjoining back wall, were constructed from plywood and covered with a coat of stone craft spray paint. The brick slabs on the wall were penciled in by hand. The deteriorated Egyptian column on the side of the Mummy's sarcophagus was the only portion of the base retained from the Moebius kit.



The cobra was modified from Moebius' Mummy and cut down to fit into the snake charmer's basket which was simply a repainted cardboard container purchased at the local Creative Habitat.

The 'High Priest Scroll of Life' in Curly's hand was taken from Sideshow's 8-inch Mummy action figure released in 1998. Several 'sight gags' have been added in as well: a bear trap – or rather, *Mummy trap* – was procured from Sideshow's 2001 12-inch *Wolf Man* figure. And finally, the net in Moe's hand came from a red mesh onion bag that was spray painted gray.



